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COMMITMENT/RESPONSIBILITY AVOIDANCE STRATEGIES IN MOROCCAN
ARABIC LANGUAGE USE

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Dedication

To Malak, my daughter.

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Abstract

The study of patterns of message construction, or of language usage *simpliciter*, has provided a significant means of ingress to some of the most vital aspects of social interaction. This assumption has been the primary motive behind our interest in, and investigation of, the empirically observable, and pervasive speech phenomenon of *commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies*, specifically among native speakers of Moroccan Arabic.

In most societies, respecting one's commitments and upholding one's responsibilities are regarded as objective measures of moral integrity. Failing in both respects entails serious consequences to be borne on a person's public self-image. Consequently, language users would find it on occasions necessary to avoid committing themselves to the promises and assertions they make, just as they would attempt to avoid their responsibility for blameworthy actions. Politeness considerations and face preservation motives seem to be the overarching purposes for making commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances. The present research work is, therefore, anchored in, and relevant to, two of the major theoretical frameworks in linguistic pragmatics, namely, speech-act and politeness theories.

This thesis aims to determine whether native speakers of MA have a tendency to make commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances, or, otherwise, perform self-committing and responsibility-accepting speech-acts, in response to speech situations involving face-threat. It also aims at identifying the realization patterns or output strategies used for performing the language acts under study. Collection of the relevant data is carried out using quantitative instrumentation. The dual-choice questionnaire and the DCT used as data collection methods consist of a varied set of situational prompts, which involve speech acts with different rankings of imposition.

Based on the research findings, we have been able to make valid inferences concerning the extent to which the informants' choices are indicative of their tendency to avoid commitment/responsibility. This tendency has been confirmed by the results yielded for most of the situational prompts on the questionnaire, and a clear correlation between the gender, level of education, and age variables is observed as female, illiterate, and older respondents tend to be more avoiding of commitment/responsibility than the remaining groups. Taking responses to Situation (4) (i.e. an information request situation) as an example, we observe that 76% of males against 81% of females have opted for the commitment avoidance utterance choice provided in option (A). Illiterate respondents have shown a similar pattern of responses: 100% of these respondents against 71% of respondents with a university level of education have opted for commitment avoidance response A. Likewise, 100% of respondents aged above 65 against 70% of respondents aged [15-25] have chosen option A in responding to Situation 4. Of note also is that the tendency to avoid commitment/responsibility is relatively low where the degree of imposition on negative face is assessed as being high. Responses to Situation (3) (i.e. the car-borrowing request situation) lend evidence to this finding as only 22% of male respondents against 30% of females have chosen to avoid commitment.

We have equally been able to identify a total of 19 pragmatic moves/strategies, and 4 syntactic processes used for making commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances. The implications of the study have a bearing on different fields of interest, including SLA research, and speech act and politeness theories.

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List of Abbreviations

FTAs	Face-Threatening Acts
DCT	Discourse Completion Test
MA	Moroccan Arabic
NS	Native speaker
H	Hearer
<i>P</i>	Proposition
S	Speaker
SAT	Speech-Act Theory

List of phonetic symbols

Consonants		Vowels	
Phonetic symbol/sound	Equivalent letter in Arabic	Short vowels	Long vowels
ʌ	ع	/u/ or /ʊ/ (book)	u: (shoot)
d ^f	ض	/i/ or /ɪ/ (bid)	i: (seat)
ʒ	ج	a (french 'la')	a: (father)
z	ز	e (pet)	ɔ: (law)
g	ك*	æ (nap)	ɜ: (bird)
ħ	ح	ɒ (pot)	aɪ (fine)
h	ه	ʌ (crush)	eɪ (pain)
x	خ	ə (alive)	eə (hair)
ʃ	ش		ɪə (near)
θ	ث		aʊ (how)
t ^f	ط		ɔɪ (boy)
s ^f	س		əʊ (phone)
ʕ	ع		ʊə (poor)
q	ق		
m	م		
n	ن		
r	ر		
f	ف		
l	ل		
b	ب		
t	ت		
d	د		
ʔ	ة		
ʒ	ج		
s	س		
ð	ذ		
k	ك		
dʒ	ج*		
tʃ	ت*		
ʔ	ء		
j	ي		
w	و		

* The phonemes tʃ and ʒ do not have an orthographical representation in Standard Arabic, but do exist natively in many varieties of the Arabic language, namely in Moroccan Arabic. The phones dʒ and ʒ are two variants or realizations of the phoneme ʒ. Both of these variants exist in Moroccan Arabic.

General Introduction

0. General Introduction

0.0 Introduction

It is a truism to state that the linguistic triviatas of everyday life do reflect some of the basic foundations of human social life. In fact, the inherent importance of studies in language usage cannot be overstated. This is a view to which many scholars subscribe, including Radcliffe-Brown (1952), Lévi-Strauss (1963), Fortes (1969b), Beck (1972), Giddens (1973), Nadel (1975), Sinclair (1976), and Brown and Levinson (1987) to name just a few.

Despite this apparent significance, research relative to the dimensions by which humans understand, relate to, and cooperate with one another in everyday interaction has been accorded only a thin strand of interest in comparison to the research effort invested in institutional discourse (e.g. political, religious, legal, etc.)

We intend, therefore, in a retreat from such practice, to show how special and specific ways of using language in daily social encounters reflect deeply rooted cultural values and social ethos. We also aim to demonstrate the complex inner workings of human rationality, and its mutual presumption by interactants in the making of inferences beyond the initial purport of words. In this spirit, it is with a special instance of language usage that the present study shall concern itself, namely, a type of pragmatic strategies we shall henceforth call "commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies".

0.1 Rationale

The observed pervasiveness in the use of commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies in social interaction, specifically among native speakers of MA, has been among the major motives for conducting the present research work. It is common for MA language users to express their intention to do something without actually undertaking to do it, or to express their belief concerning a certain fact without committing themselves to the truth of their propositions. It seems equally common for these speakers to avoid admitting their

responsibility for the negative acts they do.

We believe that an investigation of the pragmatic strategies/resources by means of which MA speakers avoid commitment/responsibility in interaction will help us better understand the language use phenomenon in question and account for its prevalence among NS of MA. An investigation of this kind will also reveal the inherent social implications of this language use phenomenon, and the assumptions that the MA language user seems to hold about face, politeness, and about what, in their view, constitutes 'good' relationship management.

Another motive behind this investigation relates to the apparent gap in existing research knowledge on the topic of commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies. It seems that no research work has addressed this phenomenon in any speech community prior to this work. One study, a Ph.D dissertation, which appears to be related (but only remotely) to our work is entitled "Public (Non-) Apologies: The Discourse of Minimizing Responsibility." As implied by the title, the study addresses the realization of apologies in discourse, more specifically, in the Israeli public political arena between the years 1997-2004). Kampf (2007; cited in Kampf (2009: 8)) was especially interested in the strategies used by Israeli politicians to minimize responsibility in making their apologies.

The study noted above differs from ours in substantial ways. It is clearly not an investigation of commitment or responsibility avoidance strategies. Rather, it focuses on non-genuine apology utterances in which public figures attempt to reconcile the tension between preserving their symbolic power from which a public apology may detract, and the necessity to conform to the (pseudo) moral standard of apologizing that is in vogue in the contemporary Israeli public sphere (Kampf, 2009: 6). The study also investigates the attempts speakers make at minimizing responsibility in public apology utterances, and not in mundane social interaction as is our case. We, may, therefore safely lay claim to the originality of the topic

and to the the fact that the study is exploratory in character; it aims at filling an observed gap in the research relative to pragmatic strategy use.

0.2 The Theoretical Framework Adopted

The present thesis draws on speech-act and politeness theories, and on the Gricean model of communication; three well-established theoretical paradigms in the field of linguistic pragmatics. These theories are derived from the works of eminent philosophers of language, including Austin (1962), Searle (1965, 1969, 1975a, 1975b, 1979, 1985), Grice (1975, 1989), and Brown and Levinson (1987).

Drawing on Austin's (1962) work on speech acts, Searle (1969: 12-14) maintains that the point or purpose of the members of the assertive and commissive class of speech acts is to commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something's being the case, or to a certain course of action, respectively. Accordingly, both assertions and promises are commissive speech acts. Our thesis is concerned with language acts whose point is the inverse of what commissive acts typically do; their point being to indicate that the speaker *does not commit* himself to doing future act *A* or to the truth of *P*.

The present work also draws on politeness and face theory. It is evident that speakers use commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances mainly for face-preservation purposes. To place oneself under the obligation to do future act *A* and to commit oneself to the truth of an assertion are no doubt more face-threatening to the speaker than to avoid making the commitment. Likewise, avoiding, denying, or not acknowledging responsibility for one's negative/blamable acts is considered to be more face-saving than accepting blame and admitting one's responsibility for those acts.

The Gricean notions of maxims and of implicature are also relevant to our work. In fact, these notions account for most commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances as speakers generally tend to avoid commitment/responsibility non-explicitly.

0.3 Basic Assumptions

Carried out within the pragmatic framework of speech-act theory, this thesis adheres, in principle, to the assumption that language users perform commissive speech-acts, either by committing themselves to a future course of action (e.g. promising), or by committing themselves to something's being the case (e.g. stating). We have observed, however, that the binding nature of these speech acts to speakers, and the serious ramifications they may have on their public self-image when a promise is not kept, or a statement is found false very often compel speakers to avoid commitment to the propositional content of their promises and assertions. Taking into account Austin's and Searle's speech-act models, this type of utterances runs counter to the intuitions of philosophers and linguists, and do not conform to normal ways of promising and asserting. A valid empirical question to ask, therefore, relates to the type of *strategies speakers use to make non-commissive language acts*.

It is fairly easy to provide prototypical examples of the kind of utterances we have in mind. In the following exchange, speaker B (a father) responds to a request for information with a commitment avoidance utterance routinely used by MA speakers:

(1) A: baba, wæf ɣansafɾu hæd lɕu:tʰla ?

Dad, are we going to travel this holiday?

B: ħna mɕa lmæktæb.

We act in accordance with fate.

Of special interest it is to note that B's utterance involves, in addition to avoiding commitment, a responsibility-avoiding strategy which involves the use of fatalistic language (since reference to fate as an agent/actor is made). The use of fatalistic language as a commitment/responsibility avoidance strategy in the exchange above is intended to convey the following: (a) the fact of travelling or not travelling, and even the will to travel or not to travel, is conditioned and controlled by fate; and (b) Speaker B is not responsible for any

potential frustration that may inconvenience his son and family, for he is, in much the same way as the rest of the family, only a spectator of, and *a victim* of fate.

The use of fatalism as a strategy in general has the double purpose of avoiding both commitment and responsibility. In fact, these two concepts, 'commitment' and 'responsibility' are closely interrelated as we shall show in Chapter One (Section 1.1). It is against the background of these assumptions that we formulate the objectives and research questions of the study.

0.4 Research Objectives

Basically, this thesis attempts to achieve three major objectives. The first objective is to find out whether or not, and to what extent, speakers of MA tend, in their everyday interactions, to produce commitment/responsibility-avoiding utterances or, otherwise, tend to perform self-committing and responsibility-admitting speech acts. The second objective is to address the question of whether or not, and to what degree, such social variables as gender, level of education, and age have any incidence on MA speakers' commitment/responsibility avoidance speech behavior. The third aim is to identify and characterize the various discourse strategies speakers of MA employ in order to avoid commitment, or responsibility, or both.

0.5 Research Questions

We assume that the objectives outlined above can be achieved by addressing the following set of research questions:

- (1) In speech situations involving face-threats, will speakers of MA tend to choose commitment/responsibility-avoiding utterances or will they, instead, opt for self-committing and responsibility-accepting speech-acts?
- (2) On the assumption that speakers of MA will generally tend to choose commitment/responsibility-avoiding utterances, to what extent is their

choice influenced by the social variables of gender, level of education, and age?

- (3) On the assumption that the mentioned social variables do have an incidence on MA speakers' socio-pragmatic behavior, what discourse strategies do these speakers employ in order to avoid commitment/responsibility?

0.6 Methodology

In order to successfully address our research questions and, hopefully, achieve our research objectives, we intend to use two complementary data collection methods, namely, a Discourse Completion Test and a dual-choice questionnaire. While both instruments involve the same situational prompts intended to elicit what the respondents would say in reaction to the suggested hypothetical speech-situations, their response format differs. The DCT has an unstructured response format as the respondent is provided with no input options, while the dual-choice questionnaire, on the other hand, uses a dual-option idiographic response format. In the dual-choice questionnaire, two response categories are provided: the first response option functions as the target utterance (i.e. a commitment/responsibility avoidance utterance) while the second is an utterance where the speaker directly admits responsibility for a blamable past action.. The number of answer choices that a respondent is required to select as far as the questionnaire is concerned is limited to a single response.

0.7 Data Classification

The data obtained through the dual-choice questionnaire are to be recorded and organized in tabular form. The tables will provide the frequency counts and percent values representing the respondents' reactions to each situation. The data elicited for each questionnaire item (in our case a situational prompt) will be classified according to the two response options provided as input categories. Given the purposes of the study, the data will

also be classified in terms of the three parameters taken into consideration by the researcher. This classification will enable us to identify the prevalent tendency concerning commitment/responsibility avoidance, and to examine the differences in the response patterns given by the different groups surveyed in the study.

Unlike the dual-choice questionnaire, the DCT is a stimulus-driven production task. As such, it requires a qualitative, non-statistical presentation layout. Based on the responses obtained through the DCT, we expect to be able to assemble a fairly large number of respondent-formulated utterances into different strategy sets. The analysis of the DCT data will therefore be carried out according to the commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies identified based on the elicited data. Each strategy will be illustrated with data from the DCT, and will be described in terms of frequency of occurrence, and its corresponding percent value. The analyses of the DCT and the dual-Choice questionnaire data will have both a descriptive and an explanatory status.

0.8 Organization of the Work

This thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter provides a comprehensive survey of the relevant literature. In it, we present the main theories and discuss a set of key concepts pertaining to the field of linguistic pragmatics. The reviewed literature include Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory, Searle's (1965, 1969, 1975a, 1975b, 1979, 1985) contributions to the theory, Grice's (1975, 1989) theory of implicature, and Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory. We have also appended to the reviewed literature a paper/section entitled "A Characterization of Commitment Avoidance Utterances", with the aim of providing a theoretical basis for classifying non-obligating utterances. We define this type of utterances in terms of their essential condition, and also in terms of the kind of action typically performed in their issuance.

The second chapter presents and explains the methodology adopted in this thesis. It

provides a detailed description of the research questions and the assumptions underlying the research. It also characterizes the measures to be used for data collection and the relevance of these measures to the purposes of the study. The chapter describes the sampling procedure, the population sample as well as the data classification and analysis procedures.

The aim of the third chapter is to process and analyze the data collected through both the dual-choice questionnaire and the DCT. The frequency counts and percent values representing the respondents' answers will be provided so as to have fact-based answers to our research questions.

Chapter four offers a discussion and an interpretation of the research findings in relation to our research questions and thesis objectives, linking, where applicable, the results of the study to the research questions and to the relevant literature. A general conclusion will sum up the main findings of the thesis, point out its weaknesses, if any, and suggest potential avenues for further research.

0.9 Conclusion

The General Introduction provided above has established the context, scope, and significance of the thesis. It states the rationale for conducting the study, the premises, and assumptions on which the thesis is based, as well as outlines the research objectives and research questions the study aims to investigate. It also briefly presents the methodological design adopted, noting the data collection methods and the classification and analysis procedures implemented. The last section in the General Introduction outlines the remaining structure or organization of the work. As noted above, Chapter One, which provides a review of the relevant literature, is provided next.

Chapter One: Literature Review

1. A Review of the Relevant Literature

1.0 Introduction

This chapter is a synthetic review of the body of literature we consider to have a bearing on the topic of "Commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies". As such, it acts as a foundation for our research work, placing the study within its relevant theoretical framework. It provides a discussion of the relevant theories, linking, where pertinent, the key concepts we survey to examples of direct relevance to our thesis topic.

We begin this chapter with a discussion of the concepts of 'commitment' and 'responsibility'. Elucidating the usages of the two terms and their interdependency from the outset is crucial in foregrounding and making viable a key constituent in the thesis, namely, commitment and responsibility avoidance language use phenomenon. We then present the perspective we adopt in this thesis on language and communication. A discussion of Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1965, 1969, 1975a, 1975b, 1979, 1985) Speech-Act Theory, and of Grice's (1975, 1989) Cooperative Principle and work on conversational implicature is also provided. We end the chapter with a review of Brown and Levinson's (1987) work on politeness.

1.1 'Commitment' and 'Responsibility': Defining the Concepts

Any dictionary definition¹ of 'commitment' and 'responsibility' will reveal that both terms involve the notions of obligation and agency. In general usage, the two terms are very often used interchangeably. Thus, one might say "He honors his commitments" as well as say "He honors his responsibilities". And typically, a responsible person is considered to be someone who meets his commitments. We may describe some people as responsible and committed and others as irresponsible and non-committed. This means that both responsibility and commitment name a virtue as they apply to individuals who are known to act responsibly and to respect their commitments.

1. In the Merriam-Webster dictionary, for instance, 'commitment' is defined as "adherence to something to which one is bound by a pledge or promise". 'Responsibility' is defined as "something one must do because of prior agreement."

There seems to be a fine shade of meaning that makes for a slight difference in the usage of the terms 'commitment' and 'responsibility'. To say, for instance, that "A pilot is responsible for the safety of all passengers" is tantamount to saying that "It is incumbent upon the pilot, that it is his obligation, or his duty, to keep all the passengers on board of the plane safe". On the other hand, to say that "Pilot Smith is committed to keeping all the passengers safe" means that "pilot Smith considers it to be his personal obligation, and is willing, to keep all the passengers safe". The two usages seem to suggest that commitment is intrinsic and responsibility is extrinsic to the person concerned. *We* make our commitments, for *we* choose, or believe it is our duty, to undertake certain actions. On the other hand, responsibilities are assigned and attributed to us by others. One makes a commitment oneself, but is held accountable/responsible by others.

Yet, this analysis may be challenged by the fact that the terms 'commitment' and 'responsibility' are not always used in the way noted above, for it is possible in common usage to say "I make it my responsibility/duty to do X" in the sense of "I commit myself to doing X". Moreover, even in cases where one willingly makes a certain commitment, once that commitment is made public, one becomes, and is generally regarded by others as, the person responsible for fulfilling that commitment. Essentially, commitment entails responsibility. There is therefore no substantial difference between the concepts in question.

Of special note, however, is the fact that the term 'responsibility' may be used with a yet additional and different sense than the first (i.e. as obligation) where the second sense involves causation and accountability. Notice, for instance, the two different senses in which the adjective 'responsible' is used in the following sentence:

- (2) As Chief-housekeeper, you are *responsible* for managing the servants, and supervising their work. If anything goes wrong in the house, you are to be held *responsible*.

In the literature on moral responsibility, the two senses of responsibility we have noted above are described by (Duff, 1998: 290) as "prospective" and "retrospective" responsibility, referring to duty and accountability, respectively. Retrospective responsibility involves a moral

(desert-based) judgment of the person held accountable, so that this person is liable to feeling remorse (or pride), to being blamed (or praised), to making amends (or receiving thanks and gratitude) (cf. Garrath, 2006). The two usages are in any case closely linked, for we hold someone responsible when they fail to perform what they have (tacitly or explicitly) agreed and undertaken to do.

Interest in the notions of responsibility and commitment is also found in philosophical circles² and in corporate business research. A semantic account of the notions of 'commitment' and 'responsibility' will suffice for the purposes of the present study.

Commitment and responsibility are, from a semantic standpoint, interrelated, though not synonymous. We have argued that commitment involves the notions of obligation and agency, such that committing oneself to doing a certain act and committing to the truth of a proposition makes one responsible for doing that act and for the truth of that proposition. Commitment, therefore, implies responsibility, as illustrated by the example: He honors his commitments/responsibilities.

Because the concepts just discussed are semantically interrelated, we consider it justifiable and relevant to extend the scope of the study to include, not only data with a commitment avoidance pragmatic intent, but also cases intended to avoid responsibility for past actions, and shall refer to both as "commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances". The only distinction we may have to make between the two terms relates to the kind of acts that would potentially trigger a commitment avoidance utterance and the kind that would be used to elicit a responsibility avoidance utterance. Commitment-avoidance utterances are typically made in response to requestive acts, while responsibility-avoidance utterances are made in reaction to (implicit) accusations. This distinction is due to a difference in the time of action relative to commitment and responsibility: A commitment is generally made toward some future act, while responsibility (in the sense of accountability/retrospective responsibility) is generally about a past negative act.

2. In philosophical circles, different scholars (e.g. Strawson 1962; Watson 2008 [1987]; Bennett 1980; Wallace 1994; Russel 2004; Shoemaker 2007) have addressed the notion of moral responsibility from different perspectives. The focus has been on what moral responsibility is, and on the criteria for holding others accountable.

In this sense, to elicit a commissive act, a speaker typically refers to a future act to be performed by the hearer, rather than to a past act. And as a matter of fact, the speaker requesting H to do a certain act A or to provide him/her with information (in cases of requests for information) is not normally entitled to that act or to that information. Hence, the requester will expect H to either accept or refuse to comply with the request, or to respond with a commitment-avoidance utterance, where the speaker neither accepts nor rejects the request. The latter possibility is illustrated in exchange (3) below:

(3) A: Can you pick me up on your way to work tomorrow? (A request)

B: I don't know if I can. (A commitment-avoidance utterance)

On the other hand, an accusation is necessarily about a past blamable act performed by someone who has failed to fulfill a commitment/obligation he/she had previously undertaken or agreed to do by will or by force. An accusation will typically prompt a direct admission of responsibility, or a responsibility-avoiding response. Example (4) below is given for illustration:

(4) A: You forgot to lock the door! Again! (An accusation)

B: Well, you always forget the lights open. (A responsibility-avoidance utterance)

In the section above, we have shown how the notions of 'commitment' and 'responsibility' are semantically related by implication. We have also discussed the kind of acts that potentially trigger the production of commitment/responsibility-avoidance utterances. The next section describes and discusses the perspective we adopt in this thesis on meaning, language, and communication. The aim behind this discussion is to situate the thesis within its relevant field. The discussion will also serve as a passageway to reviewing the general framework from which the study mainly draws, namely, the framework of Speech-Act Theory, which views communication principally as action.

1.2 Our Perspective on Language and Communication

Perspectives on language tend to vary in accordance with the researcher's theoretical bias,

and research interests. Some scholars study language as a rule-governed system, focusing on different levels of linguistic structuring (i.e. phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, etc.). Other researchers view it as a cognitive and psychological phenomenon while some others study language as a social fact. That language is a multidisciplinary concept presupposes that the study of linguistic phenomena involve more than a reductionist discrete point analysis of sets of linguistic abstractions.

It was this recognition that initially instigated the inception of a general science of signs. The beginning of this science, Semiotics, is grounded in Morris's work *Foundations of The Theory of Signs* (1938). Morris's (1938: 6) triad of 'syntactics', 'semantics' and 'pragmatics' is by far one of the most compelling contributions to the study of language and to the formation of an overall integrated linguistic theory.

The nature of 'meaning' does necessitate a hybrid account. Both pragmatics and Semantics deal in, and with, issues of meaning. So, there had to be a division of labour so that the two fields may be established on homogeneous rather than amorphous bases. Principles of language use, matters of context, speaker meaning and the ironic, metaphoric, and implicit or indirect communicative content of an utterance are issues dealt with in pragmatics while the study of the relation between signs and the objects to which they refer, and the study of truth-conditional and componential or feature-based meaning is the concern of semantics.

In connection with the idea of an integrated linguistic theory, We relevantly note the notion of 'pragmantax' to refer to a unified component of a grammar, in which syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic processes and rules become interspersed in various ways (See Ross, 1975: 252). Pragmantax is, in other words, the interface between syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. It is not tenable, as Ross (1975: 252) points out, to engage in the work of linking surface structures to the sets of contexts in which they may be appropriately used, and still treat semantactic processes and pragmatic rules/processes as different components of a grammar. This, of course, as Ross (1975: 252) continues, does not necessarily mean that the distinction between pragmatic, semantic, and

syntactic aspects of linguistic structure should be abandoned.

Looking at the three branches of linguistic inquiry as successive abstract levels of analysis, Carnap (1942: 9) delineates each field from the other in these terms:

If we are analyzing a language, then we are, of course, concerned with expressions. But we need not necessarily deal with speakers and designata. Although these factors are present wherever language is used, we may abstract from one or both of them in what we intend to say about the language in question. Accordingly, we distinguish three fields of investigation of languages. If in an investigation explicit reference is made to the speaker, or, to put it in more general terms, to the user of a language, then we assign it to the field of pragmatics. [...] If we abstract from the user of the language and analyze only the expressions and their designata, we are in the field of semantics. And if, finally, we abstract from the designata also and analyze only the relations between the expressions, we are in (logical) syntax. The whole science of language, consisting of the three parts mentioned, is called semiotics.

Carnap (1942: 9)

The concern of our study is not with the formal aspect of the target structures (i.e. the lexical and grammatical markers indicating commitment avoidance) in their own right, nor with the meaning of these structures at sentence level. Our emphasis is rather on the communicative value assigned to the utterance by language users-i.e. the pragmatic intent of speakers. In this sense, we are not interested in the context-free attribution of meaning to linguistic structures, which is the domain of Semantics, but with the relation of linguistic form to speakers' intentions and to the whole context of utterance.

Example (5) below illustrates the way speaker- meaning is conveyed and understood by the hearer in virtue of the context of utterance. Speakers A and B in the exchange are native speakers of Moroccan Arabic. B(1) and B(2) are two possible responsibility non-admitting utterances to A's indirect accusation.

(5) A: fi:n həʔeti sswarət ʃæwtæ:ni ?
Where did you put the keys again?

B : maʃrəftʃ fi:n mʃæw.
I don't know where they're gone.

Speaker B does not blame some identifiable agent for losing the keys, nor does he admit to having lost the keys. At face value, the speaker is simply asserting that he has no knowledge of where the keys are, but is that all that is conveyed in his utterance? It appears that what any

competent recipient is able to make of B's utterance is that speaker B does not intend merely to inform the hearer that he does not know where the keys are, but also that he is not responsible for losing the keys (though this is not clearly said, it is implied). By using the word '*m/æw*' (i.e. They left or they are gone), speaker B attributes a willful action, normally attributed to humans, to an inanimate object, thereby distancing himself from the blamable or negative act of losing the keys, and, by extension, avoiding responsibility for that act.

To A's indirect accusation, given in exchange (5) above, one might respond with another responsibility-avoiding utterance, very commonly used by native speakers of MA, by saying, for example, "*maʃrəftʃ fi:n mʃæt bihum jəddi*" (I don't know where my hands took them). Again, there is only one and only one plausible reason why a speaker would refer to his hand as the doer of a certain act than to simply (and perhaps more rationally) refer to himself as the agent of that act, or why he would refer to an inanimate object as an agent with human attributes instead of himself as the agent (as in example 5). It is not by way of using a figure of speech designed to impress the hearer; it is to minimize the degree of his involvement in the act. Of course, the responsibility-avoiding actor does not expect his interlocutor to believe that the keys moved all by themselves, or that his hand acted against his will, but he is certain that phrasing his utterance the way s/he did will most likely serve him/her better than a direct admission of the kind given in utterance (6) below:

(6) *dʒəʃt swarti.*
I lost my key.

Utterances (5) and (6) involve different speaker intentions, are encoded in language differently, and will potentially produce different effects on the hearer.

We adopt the view that the meaning of a word or phrase is revealed in its use, and that communication is primarily goal-directed action. Speaking consists in performing language acts, the meaning of which can only be understood in relation to the speaker and the situation. This perspective on language is in fact the result of the large body of literature produced on speech acts.

1.3 Austin's Speech-Act Theory (SAT).

1.3.1 An Introduction.

Austin's work is both part and a result of the development of the modern philosophy of language. This development is considered to have begun with the work of the German philosopher and Mathematician Frege (1892), whose distinction between the notions of 'sense' and 'reference' was a most significant contribution. Frege has come with a number of ideas, which are regarded as turning points in the history of language philosophy. Among these ideas is Frege's proposal that sentences refer in the same way names do, and that sense determines reference rather than the reverse. In his *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik (Foundations of Arithmetical)*, Frege (1884: 73) makes the statement that "Nur im Zusammenhang eines Satzes bedeuten die Wörter etwas" meaning "it is only in the context of a proposition that words have any meaning" (Austin's (1960: 73) translation). One should not ask about the meaning of words in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition (the linguistic context). Therefore, a sentence is a vehicle for the proposition, and meaning can be arrived at objectively without appeal to fact and independently of whether the referring expressions contained in the sentence correspond to facts/objects in the real world. The meaning of a sentence is the non-psychological (non-subjective/objective) thought expressed by it. Only in virtue of the sentence itself can we arrive at meaning. The meaning of an expression is independent from facts, and from the speaker's knowledge of these facts. Frege's idea of context together with his idea that truth is not there a priori, that the meaning of a sign, an expression, or a sentence cannot be simply established by its reference (what it designates in the real world) has led other scholars to borrow the Fregean context principle as a basis for their theorem. Among these scholars is Searle (1969: 25) who considers Frege's idea that only in the context of a sentence do words have reference to be tantamount to his (Searle's) assumption that "one only refers as part of the performance of an illocutionary act", and that "the grammatical clothing of an illocutionary act is the complete sentence".

Following Frege was Wittgenstein's (1953) posthumous work *Philosophical Investigations*,

which appeared after WWII, marking a turn in his own philosophy³, in a large leap forward and away from the view that propositions "pictured" the world, and that "the verification principle" is the only criterion for meaningfulness. Wittgenstein's (1958: 43[1953]) contention that *meaning is use* shifted interest in philosophical circles from notions like truth and the reference of words and expressions to a concern with the pragmatic dimensions of language. For Wittgenstein (1958: 23 [1953]), language is a diverse and mercurial combination of what he calls 'language-games'. He (1958: 23 [1953]) points out "How many kinds of sentence are there? Say assertion, question, and command?—There are countless kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call "symbols", "words", "sentences". And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games". He (1958: 23[1953]) adds that the term "language-game" is "meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life". Language, therefore, consist in goal-directed social activities for which words are tools to get things done, to assert, command, reject, promise, threaten, etc.

Wittgenstein's (1953) work caused quite a stir in philosophical circles, which led many philosophers of language to attempt to describe the many uses to which language can be put, and the many things/actions we can do using words. Austin's (1962) seminal investigation of speech acts is regarded as one of the greatest works that made philosophers realize the breadth and diversity of the ways in which language can be used.

1.3.2 Performative vs. Constative Utterances.

Austin's theory came in reaction to the restricted view that any proposition should in principle be verifiable if it is to be considered meaningful. Austin (1962) ravaged this positivist core tenet with examples that were perfectly meaningful, but which do not even set out to be true or fal

3. According to Wittgenstein (1922: 28), the world divides into facts; which are either positive or negative, and the whole business of language is to assert or deny such facts according to whether they are positive or negative

(E.a) 'I do (sc. take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife)' -- as uttered in the course of the marriage ceremony

(E.b) 'I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth' - as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem.

(E.c) 'I give and bequeath my watch to my brother' -- as occurring in a will

(E.d) 'I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow'

(Austin 1962: 5)

Because these utterances do not describe, or report on, any existing state of affairs, they cannot be said to be true or false. Other than being unverifiable, in the case of this special class of sentences, the uttering of the sentence itself constitutes the doing of an action. That is, the mere uttering of the words has the power of changing the existing state of affairs in consequential ways. Austin (ibid: 6) explains that when a competent speaker of a language says 'I do' in a marriage ceremony, that speaker is not reporting on the marriage or informing about it; rather, he is indulging in it.

In a less classical example than Austin's, if a boss says to his employee "You are fired", it is not a matter of merely saying that the employee is fired, it is a matter of having that employee actually fired. Similarly, someone who says "I promise I will ..." is clearly not stating a fact about himself to the effect that he promises. Rather, he is making a promise; he is performing a speech act: the act of promising. Words in fact are used to *do* things; to perform actions.

Because words count as doings, and are of a strong binding nature to the speaker, speakers tend more often than not to avoid commitment to the truth of their propositions than to undertake future acts in straightforward and unambiguous ways.

Utterances such as 'I promise you', "I congratulate you", "I offer you ...", "I apologize", and "I request that ..." etc., all belong to the class of utterances which Austin calls 'performatives'. Austin (ibid: 6) contrasts "performatives" to "constatives"; utterances made with a historical reference. To issue a constative utterance is, for example, to make a statement. Constatives,

including statements and assertions, are typically verifiable and do not count as actions; they only describe, or report on, some fact about the world.

To establish his distinction on firmer ground, Austin proposes a number of criteria with the aim of isolating the performative. He (ibid: 56) suggests using a grammatical criterion for identifying performative utterances. He (ibid: 56) notes that the commonest and most indubitable cases of the performative have the verb in the first person singular present indicative active, as in 'I name', 'I bet', and 'I bequeath'. Austin, however, soon realizes that verbs in performative utterances may be in second (or third) person (singular or plural), and in first person plural, as in "You are warned not to cross the railroad" and "We authorize you to leave the premises", respectively (both examples are mine). The main verb in a performative utterance may also be used in tenses other than the present as in "You were off-side" (Austin, ibid: 58), or in a passive voice sentence (e.g. "Notice is given that forest litterers could be fined \$40" (example mine)).

Subsequently, Austin (ibid: 59) attempts to use a lexicographical criterion to examine whether certain operative words like 'promise', 'authorize', and 'order' will do as a test for distinguishing the performative from the non-performative. He (ibid.) discovers that we not only can get the performative without the operative words (i.e. we could say "I shall be there" instead of "I promise to be there" or simply "turn right" instead of "I order you to turn right"), but that we could get the operative words without the utterance being performative at all.

Austin (ibid: 61), then, suggests the "hereby" test as a useful alternative such that an utterance is said to be performative whenever the "hereby" formula proves applicable. Austin (ibid.: 64-65), however, finds several major faults with the "I (hereby) V" formula: (1) it is too formal for ordinary purposes, (2) it can easily be used with constatives (e.g. "I hereby state that *p*" or "I hereby assert that *p*"), and (3) the verb may have non-performative uses as it may describe how I habitually behave or may be used in ways similar to the historic present.

Though not any of the tests used so far serves to clearly distinguish constatives from performatives, they turn out to have served a different purpose: distinguishing between what Austin

calls “primary” and “explicit” performatives (Austin, *ibid*: 61). According to Austin (*ibid*: 62), an explicit performative is an utterance containing a formula that makes explicit what action is being performed, whereas an utterance which does not make explicit its force is a primary or implicit performative. Thus, “I hereby pronounce you guilty” is an explicit performative; it uses the performative verb ‘pronounce’ and it is used in the first person singular present indicative active with the hereby formula. To this explicit formula corresponds a number of primary performative utterances, such as “Guilty”, or “You did it” *simpliciter*.

To overcome this state of stalemate on the performative-constative dichotomy, Austin (*ibid*) contends that though there is danger of his initial distinction to break down, the distinction could still survive because we could always revert to the idea that constatives can be true or false while performatives can only be felicitous (happy) or infelicitous (unhappy).

The doctrine of the Infelicities, as Austin (1962: 14) calls it, refers to “the doctrine of the things that can be or can go wrong on the occasion of such utterances”. Two types of infelicities have been identified by Austin (*ibid*: 15-16): misfires and abuses. Misfires refer to cases in which the act which we purport to invoke is disallowed, and is consequently not achieved at all. Misfires can occur either because the persons and/or circumstances in a given case are not appropriate for the invocation of the procedure (i.e. misinvocations) or because the procedure has been incorrectly or incompletely executed (i.e. misexecutions). Abuses, on the other hand, refer to cases where the persons, circumstances are appropriate for the procedure and where the procedure is correctly and completely achieved, but where the person invoking the procedure is insincere; that is, does not have the requisite feelings, thoughts, or intentions. Condoling someone on his loss when in fact I do not feel the least sympathy for the person, or advising someone to do something when I actually think and know that my advice is not in his interest, or finally promising when I do not intend to keep my promise are all examples of abuses, or insincerities.

It turns out later, however, that even this last argument; namely, that constatives can be true or false while performatives felicitous or infelicitous, does not hold. In this respect, Austin

(ibid: 55) posits that considerations of the happiness and unhappiness kind may affect some statements and that considerations of the truth and falsity type may infect some performatives, so that a statement or assertion may be insincere in much the same way a promise can be and a performative can be false in the same way a statement can. Austin (1962: 55) illustrates these cases, contending that:

- (a) Saying “The cat is on the mat” when I do not believe that the cat is on the mat is a case of insincerity similar to “I promise to be there” when I do not intend to show up.
- (b) Saying that “I warn you that the bull is about to charge” when the fact is that the bull is not does not mean that the utterance “I warn you that the bull is about to charge” is infected by any of the varieties of unhappiness characterized by Austin (ibid: 15-16), for we cannot say that the warning is void (the speaker has indeed warned), nor can we say that the speaker is insincere (the speaker may have had the feeling or impression that the bull was indeed about to charge when he/she issued the utterance). The warning is therefore not void or insincere, but rather mistaken, that is, false.

Eventually, with all things considered, Austin (ibid: 133) comes to the conclusion that "to state is every bit as much to perform an illocutionary act as, say, to warn or to pronounce". There is in fact no distinction between performatives and constatives. And, accordingly, the dichotomy of performatives and constatives has, therefore, as Austin (1962: 149) points out, "to be abandoned in favour of more general *families* of related and overlapping speech acts".

The notion of ‘speech act’ operates on the basic assumption that in or by saying something, we do something. Austin (Austin, ibid: 94) refines this assumption by considering the senses in which to say something is to do something. He (Austin, ibid: 94) distinguishes three such senses, arguing that to say something is to perform a locutionary act, in saying something, we perform an illocutionary act, and by saying something, we perform a perlocutionary act. In the following section, we expand on the notions of ‘Locutionary’, ‘Illocutionary’, and ‘Perlocutionary Acts’.

1.3.3 Locutionary, Illocutionary, and Perlocutionary Acts.

For Austin (ibid: 94), a locution is equivalent to uttering certain words with a certain sense and reference; that is, with a certain meaning. Therefore, a locutionary act is simply the act of “saying something”. It involves the act of uttering certain noises (i.e. the phonetic act); noises, vocables, or words that belong to a certain vocabulary and conform to a certain grammar (i.e. the phatic act). These vocables are of course used with a more -or- less definite meaning (i.e. the rhetic act).

According to Austin (ibid: 98), to perform a locutionary act is also and *eo ipso* to perform an illocution. Typically, a locution can be used in different ways for there are numerous functions of speech. To determine what illocutionary act is being performed, we need to determine the way in which the locution is being used. Using Austin’s clear and semantically unambiguous example,

(10) The bull is going to charge,

taken alone out of context and without consideration of S's intentions, sentence (10) does not make explicit whether, at the time of utterance, the speaker was making a statement, performing a warning, or making an announcement. The way the speaker means utterance (10) to be taken constitutes the illocutionary act. Illocutionary acts are utterances which have a certain *force*. If the speaker means utterance (10) as a warning, then the force of that utterance on the occasion of speaking is one of warning. Determining the force of an utterance therefore requires that the words in the utterance be explained by ‘the context’ in which they have been spoken; rather than by the meaning of words. Austin (ibid: 99) defines what he dubs the doctrine of “illocutionary acts” as “the doctrine of the different types of function of language”. Defining the same concept, Searle (1965: 222) duly refers to an “illocutionary act” as “the minimal unit of linguistic communication”, or of pragmatic analysis, for to say that we are performing one speech act and not another; that we are communicating one thing and not another, depends entirely on the illocutionary force of the utterance.

There is yet a further way in which to say something is to do something. Performing a locutionary act, and therein an illocutionary act, will often affect the feelings, thoughts, or actions of

the hearer(s), or of the speaker. Austin (ibid: 101) calls this kind of act a perlocutionary act. Referring to this third kind of acts, Sadock (1974: 8) argues that perlocutionary acts are the by-products of acts of communication. He (ibid: 9) adds, concurring with Austin (ibid: 105), that the consequences an utterance may produce on a hearer or an audience may be intentional or unintentional. He (ibid.) contends moreover that the number of perlocutionary effects that may be associated with a particular utterance are numerous. By uttering (11) below,

(11) You don't look a day over forty (Sadock, ibid: 8),

the speaker may affect the hearer in a number of ways, ranging from insulting a young person, flattering an elderly person, amusing the audience, to embarrassing oneself.

So far as it goes, we have seen that a locutionary act is what the speaker says, an illocutionary act what the speaker is doing *in* saying the locution, and a perlocutionary act, what he is doing, or causing the hearer to say, believe, and think, *by* his utterance. We have noted that perlocutionary acts correspond to whatever effect(s) we bring about by saying something and that it is characteristic of utterances that they have numerous perlocutionary effects, both intended and unintended. However, an utterance may not have more than one illocutionary force; a speaker cannot intend an utterance such as 'I'll be there' both as a promise and a warning. Of the three types of linguistic acts mentioned in the section above, it is with the second that later sections will essentially fasten.

1.3.4 Austin's Classification of Illocutionary Acts.

In Chapter XII of How to Do Things with Words, Austin (1962: 150) presents a taxonomy of illocutionary acts based on illocutionary force:

1. *Verdictives*: These are characterized by the issuing of a verdict. They essentially consist in the delivering of a finding- final, or in progress, official or unofficial- as to a certain fact. Acquit, rule, reckon, hold, describe, analyze, calculate, estimate, rank, date, assess, and characterize are examples of verbs typifying this class (Austin, 1962: 152).
2. *Exercitives*: They are associated with "the exercising of powers, rights, or influence"

(Austin, 1962: 150). As the name implies, exercitives involve the exercise of authority. Austin (1962: 154) explains that ‘exercitives’ are distinct from verdictives in that they are associated with the giving of a decision that something is to be so, as opposed to the giving of a judgment or an estimate that something is so. Examples of this class include appoint, veto, nominate, dismiss, excommunicate, demote, degrade, and name.

3. *Commissives*: The point of a commissive is to commit the speaker to a certain course of action (Austin, 1962: 156). Austin (1962: 151) relevantly adds that commissives should also include declarations or announcements of intentions. Hence, promise, vow, pledge, declare, purpose, contract, engage, espouse, envisage, offer, threaten, swear, guarantee, covenant, undertake, etc. are all verbs with a commissive illocutionary point. In the paper appended to our literature review, we elaborate on speech acts involving commitment as a basis for our analysis of utterances indicating lack of commitment.
4. *Behavitives*: These include the expression of one’s attitude towards other people’s behavior and fortunes (or misfortunes). They also include the expressions of one’s attitude towards people’s past or imminent conduct. Austin (ibid: 159) suggests many examples of behavitives, among which we mention: felicitate, apologize, thank, condole, congratulate, compliment, resent, applaud, bless defy, and welcome.
5. *Expositives*: These, Austin (1962: 160) maintains, are typically "used in acts of exposition involving the expounding of views, the conducting of arguments and the clarification of usages and references". Expositives, Austin argues (ibid: 160), are, as the name implies, expository; they serve to describe how we are using words, and how these words fit into discourse, as when we say ‘I cite’, ‘I quote’, ‘I recapitulate’, or ‘I turn next to’. Austin (ibid: 161) enlists the following expository verbs: illustrate, affirm, deny, concede, class, describe, call, define, and emphasize.

Austin’s classification of illocutionary acts, though never viewed as complete or final, has formed the basis for the development of several alternative taxonomies (e.g. Bach and Harnish

(1979: 41)), of which Searle's (1975b) is perhaps the most prominent. Searle's contribution to SAT is important not only for providing a typology of illocutionary acts, but also for distinguishing two kinds/sets of rules he deems necessary for making these acts, namely, constitutive and regulative rules. In the following section, we provide a description of Searle's (1969) rules before we outline Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts, and of the twelve dimensions he uses as a basis for such a taxonomy.

1.4 Searle's Work on SAT

1.4.1 Searle: Rules for Making Illocutionary Acts

A brief overview of constitutive and regulative rules is needed here, for we use Searle's constitutive rules to define commitment avoidance utterances and demonstrate the ways in which they are different from commitment-making speech acts at the end of this chapter (See Section 1.7).

According to Searle (1969: 35) regulative rules regulate antecedently existing forms of behavior, which are independent from the rule. They characteristically take the form "if C, Do X", with C referring to context and X, to the action performed by the speaker. Constitutive rules, on the other hand, define or "create the very possibility of engaging in certain kinds of conduct" (Searle, *ibid.*). They take the logical form of "X counts as Y in C". For example, a promise counts as an obligation to do A, a warning as an undertaking that a future event E is not in the hearer's best interest, and a request as an attempt to get H to do future act A.

Searle and Vanderveken (1985: 16-18) further suggest the set of conditions necessary for the non-defective performance of an act, four of which are relevant to the purposes of our study. These are preparatory, propositional, sincerity, and essential conditions.

The propositional content condition is a limitation on the state of affairs described by the propositional content of an illocutionary act (or its reference and predication). Conditions on the propositional content are imposed by the force of the illocutionary act (Searle and Vanderveken, 1985: 17). In performing a request, the propositional content must be about a future act A of the hearer.

The second type of conditions, preparatory conditions, concerns a state of affairs that must be presupposed by the speaker for the successful performance of an act (ibid.: 17). In making the same requestive act noted above, the preparatory conditions that must hold are that S believes that H can perform A and that H and S believe that act A (the washing of the car by the hearer) is not part of the normal course of events (it is not expected that H would do A without being asked).

The sincerity and essential conditions relate respectively to the psychological state expressed concerning the propositional content of an illocutionary act, and to an act's illocutionary point (Searle, 1975b:345-347). Taking the example of a request, the sincerity condition is that S wants H to do A. Its essential condition is that the uttering of the requestive act counts as an attempt to get H to do A.

1.4.2 Searle's Classification of Illocutionary Acts:

In an essay entitled "A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts", Searle (1975b, 1979) proposes an alternative classification of speech acts. One aspect to note about Searle's (1975b: 354-361) typology is that it is based on twelve different criteria. Below, we provide an outline of Searle's taxonomy as well as an overview of the twelve parameters along which Searle has based his taxonomy of illocutionary acts.

Searle (1975b) distinguishes five general classes of illocutionary acts, namely, representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations:

1. *Representatives*: Searle (1975b: 354) contends that the point of a representative is to commit the speaker, in varying degrees, to the truth of *P*, to something's being the case. This class of illocutionary acts is assessable along the dimension of truth and falsity. The test of a representative is whether or not it is characterizable on the true/false dimension. He (1975b: 354) adds that the degree of belief or commitment to the truth of *p* may approach, or sometimes even reach, zero. Examples of performative verbs speakers generally use to *represent* the world are 'believe', 'suggest', 'insist', 'hypothesize', 'swear', 'state', etc. (Searle, 1975b: 354-355).

2. *Directives*: These are attempts, again of varying degrees, on the part of S to get H to do something (Searle, 1975 a: 355). These attempts may be weak/modest or strong/fierce attempts to get H to act in a specific way as S may simply suggest that H do something or insist and command that H do it, respectively (Searle, 1975b: 355). Searle (1975b: 356) suggests a number of verbs belonging to this class, including 'ask', 'request', 'command', 'order', 'question', 'pray', 'entreat', 'invite', 'suggest', 'dare', 'defy', 'challenge', etc.
3. *Commissives*: The point of these illocutionary acts is to commit the speaker, in varying degrees, to a future course of action (Searle, 1975b: 356). Examples of verbs denoting members of this class are promise, vow, pledge, covenant, contract, guarantee, embrace, swear, etc. (Searle, 1975b: 351).
4. *Expressives*: The purpose of this class of illocutionary acts, Searle (1975b: 356) postulates, is “to express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content”. This means that in performing an expressive illocutionary act, the speaker indicates/expresses some state or attitude toward the propositional content of the utterance. To illustrate, Searle (1975b: 356) suggests the following expressive verbs: apologize, thank, condole, deplore, congratulate, and welcome.
5. *Declarations*: These, on the other hand, bring a state of affairs into existence by declaring it to exist or be. In Searle’s (1975b: 358) words, declarations correspond to cases where “saying makes it so”. The members of this class of illocutionary acts bring about a change in the state or condition of the object(s) referred to by S merely and solely by virtue of the fact that the declaration has been performed (successfully that is). To illustrate this class of illocutionary acts, Searle (1975b: 358) provides the following examples:

(12) I appoint you chairman.

(13) I excommunicate you.

(14) You're fired.

Clearly, the members of this class, declarations, correspond to Austin's (1962) paradigm cases of performatives.

As noted earlier in this section, Searle's (1975b) taxonomical effort is based on several dimensions. Searle (1975b: 345) outlines twelve different dimensions in which one illocutionary act may differ from another. Variation among different illocutionary acts may be due to:

1. *Differences in Illocutionary point:* Illocutionary point is simply the purpose of the act (Searle (1975b: 345). The point of a representative is to give a description, a characterization, or a representation (true or false) of how something is, and the point of a directive, for example, is to get H to do something.
2. *Differences in the direction of fit between words and the world:* Differences in direction of fit relate basically to whether the propositional content expressed in an utterance is made to match the world or whether the world is made to match the words (the propositional content expressed) (Searle, 1975b: 346). For example, the direction of fit of a representative is to get the words to match the world and that of a directive is to get the world to match the words (Searle, 1975b: 346).
3. *Differences in expressed psychological states:* This kind of differences corresponds to differences in the state expressed by S vis-à-vis the propositional content expressed in the sentence. Thus, in performing a representative, S expresses a belief that *P*, while in performing a directive, S expresses a desire that H do A (1975b: 347; 1979: 4).
4. *Differences in the strength with which an illocutionary point is presented:* This simply means that there are varying degrees of strength with which S expresses his beliefs, wants, commitments, and his attitudes and feelings (Searle, 1975b: 348).

Though the verbs “guess” and “swear” are both representative, they obviously vary in strength and, similarly, though the verbs “command” and “request” belong to the class of directives, they certainly do not involve the same degree of strength.

5. *Differences in the status of the speaker and hearer:* Differences in the position of S and H have a bearing on the illocutionary force of an utterance. This feature is a type of preparatory condition. A directive performed by a company's CEO and addressed to the staff is most likely a command. A directive performed by a staff member to a CEO is in all likelihood a request.

6. *Differences in the way the utterance relates to the interests of S and H:* This feature, in addition to the one outlined in 5 above, is part of Searle's preparatory conditions in his analysis in *Speech Acts* (Searle's, 1975b: 348). This feature makes for differences between such illocutionary acts as offers and threats for example, as both promises and threats are members of the commissive class, but threats differ from promises in that, in the case of threats, S believes doing A is not in the interest of the H. Conversely, in the case of offers, S believes H would prefer S's doing A to his not doing it.

7. *Differences in relation to the rest of the discourse:* Some performative expressions have a rhetorical function, or, as Searle (1975b: 349) calls it, a discourse-relating function. They serve to relate/link utterances to the rest of the discourse. These expressions are usually used with statements (Searle, 1975b: 348). Thus, one may state a proposition, object to an earlier proposition, confirm it, reply to it, add to it, or deduce from it. Examples of expressions that have a discourse-relating function are "I conclude", "I object", "I deduce", "I object", "moreover", "however", etc.

8. *Differences in propositional content conditions:* These relate to what proposition S expresses in the utterance of T (1975b: 349). Commands and promises

are necessarily predicated of the speaker and must be about a future act. In contrast, reports and accusations must be about past acts.

9. *Differences between acts that must always be speech acts and those that can be performed as speech acts, but need not always be so performed:* To illustrate this feature, Searle (1975b: 349) explains that one may conclude, diagnose, or estimate, by performing a speech act just as one may conclude, diagnose, or estimate silently, without even making a silent speech act. Accordingly, I may say "I estimate the height of this palm tree at 10 feet" just as I may estimate the height of that tree silently. By contrast, certain other acts, such as declarations, must be performed as speech acts.

10. *Differences between acts that require extra-linguistic institutions and those that do not:* This tenth dimension concerns, as its name suggests, illocutionary acts that require S and H to hold special positions within an extra-linguistic institution in order for the act to be performed successfully (Searle, 1975b: 349). One of the obvious examples is that of a judge pronouncing a verdict. To give a verdict such as "found guilty" requires H to be the defendant, S to be in the position of a judge in charge of the defendant's case, and requires the act of pronouncing someone guilty to be performed within a court of law, an extra-linguistic institution.

11. *Differences between acts where the corresponding illocutionary verb has a performative use and acts where the verb has a non-performative use:* Searle (1975b: 350) gives the non-performative verb "boast" as an example, since it is not acceptable to say "I hereby boast".

12. *Differences in the style in which an illocutionary act is performed:* The verbs "announce" and "confide" have been given by Searle (1975b: 350) for illustration. Both verbs are the same in terms of illocutionary point and propositional content, but are different in terms of style of performance.

Though Searle's taxonomy draws in part on Austin's classification of illocutionary acts, the alternative taxonomy he offers seems to involve far less overlap and to have a much more consistent principle of classification.

Another noteworthy contribution by Searle concerns an interesting and special phenomenon in speech act performance which he and Vanderveken (1985: 4) call "*illocutionary denegation*". We consider this aspect of language use to be of great relevance to the topic of our thesis. According to the account given by these scholars (1985: 4), denegation involves the negation of the illocutionary force of an utterance, as in example (15):

(15) I do not promise to come.

In this example, the speaker explicitly avoids commitment to the predicated future act. However, as Searle and Vanderveken (1985: 4) have rightly pointed out, we should be careful not to conflate 'acts of illocutionary denegation' and 'illocutionary acts with a negative propositional content', as in the example provided by Searle and Vanderveken (1985: 4) below:

(16) I promise not to come.

Acts of illocutionary denegation and illocutionary acts with a negative propositional content are different because they have opposite forces (Searle and Vanderveken, 1985: 4). The point of acts of illocutionary denegation is to make explicit that the speaker does not perform a certain illocutionary act in the sense that to say that I do not promise to do A does not count as declining to do A. It counts as not committing oneself to doing A.

In making a commitment-avoidance utterance, the speaker's point is mainly to indicate to H that S does not commit himself to doing future act A (in the case of declarations of intention), and that he or she does not commit himself to the truth of *P* (in the case of expressions of belief). In making a commitment-avoidance utterance, the speaker is principally concerned with informing H that he or she is not making a promise and is not making an assertion, that he or she is under no obligation, and that s/he is not to be held accountable if future act A is not performed, or if the belief or assertion s/he expressed is found false. There are strategies for indicating this lack of

commitment, and our thesis is concerned with just those tactics/strategies that speakers generally employ to indicate non-commissiveness. Our investigation is especially interesting because speakers generally tend to avoid commitment and also responsibility implicitly rather than explicitly, unlike acts of illocutionary denegation.

Austin, the founder of speech act theory, has convincingly established that every instance of *saying* is in fact an instance of *doing*. Searle's work, which draws strongly on Austin's work, has focused on rules and conventions for making illocutionary acts. While both scholars recognize and note the importance of speaker intention through the notion of illocutionary force, it was Grice that established the notion of speaker intention as central to any theory of meaning.

Grice's theory of implicature, his notion of the Cooperative Principle, and the framework of maxims he proposes have been of perennial import to our understanding of the mechanisms behind the rational and efficient nature of talk. Grice (1989) conceives of communication along the lines of a special kind of intention designed to be recognized by interlocutors.

1.5 The Gricean Framework

1.5.1 Maxims and Supermaxims

Grice (1975: 45-6, 1989: 26-8) identifies four distinct maxims: the Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner maxims. Below, we elaborate on Grice's maxims and the implicatures connected with them, and provide, where pertinent, examples that are relevant to the thesis:

1. *The Quantity Maxim*: Under the quantity maxim fall two submaxims; (1) “make your contribution as informative as is required”, and (2) “do not make your contribution more informative than is required”.

2. *The Quality Maxim*: The Quality maxim subsumes a supermaxim, which reads “try to make your contribution one that is true”. Under this rule, Grice identifies two other submaxims: (1) “do not say what you believe is false”; and (2) do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.”

3. *The Relation maxim*: Under this category, Grice (1989: 27) places one maxim, namely,

"Be relevant". Grice (1975: 47) notes that this maxim requires that the speaker's contribution be "appropriate to immediate needs at each stage of the transaction".

4. *The Manner Maxim*: This maxim relates not to what is said, but to the way what is said is to be said. Grice places a single maxim under the Manner maxim; "Be perspicuous". The Manner Maxim subsumes four distinct submaxims:

1. Avoid obscurity of expression
2. Avoid ambiguity
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
4. Be orderly

Grice (1989: 27)

The basis for Grice's assumptions about the CP and its attendant maxims is that it is an empirical fact that speakers behave in accordance with the CP, and that this principle allows us to account for a wide range of implicatures that cannot otherwise be explained (Grice, 1989: 28-9). Grice (1989: 30) views the CP and its associated maxims as reflecting the standard type of conversational practice, which relates not to what all or most speakers follow, but to what is reasonable for speakers to follow.

There are various ways in which conversational implicatures may arise; flouting a particular maxim is only one of them. In the following section, we provide an overview of different types of conversational implicatures, using examples from Grice's work, and supporting them with examples pertinent to the object of our study.

1.5.2 Conversational Implicatures

Grice (1989: 32) contends that conversational implicatures can arise in one of three ways, and may, therefore, be classed into three different groups:

Group A: This first category of implicatures is characterized by the fact that there is no

apparent violation of the maxims. Grice (1989: 32) contends that Group A type of implicatures involves examples in which "no maxim is violated, or at least in which it is not clear that any maxim is violated". Grice (1989: 32) provides the following exchange as an example:

(17) A: I am out of petrol

B: There is a garage round the corner

Here, the connection between B's utterance and A's utterance is clear. There is no infringement on the Relation maxim, and B simply implicates that the garage round the corner is open, and that it has petrol. Grice (ibid) argues that in the case of this exchange, the speaker implicates that which he must be assumed to believe in order to preserve the supposition that he is observant of the Relation maxim.

Group B: A conversational implicature may also arise as a result of a violation of a maxim that is justified by the supposition of its clash with another maxim. We illustrate Grice's second type of conversational implicature with an example of our own. B has been avoiding to meet A and to answer his calls. Then, A meets B by chance and invites him for a drink. Speaker A suggests they should fix a time to have a drink together. The following exchange takes place:

(18) A: çæf mən fæfæk ?a s^ha: hbi. ndi:ru fī wqijət lfi qhiwa?

It's been quite some time since I last saw you. Can we fix a time for us to have coffee together?

B: nd:iru fī wəqijət fī nha:r

We can some day fix a time for us to have coffee together.

In the case above, speaker B avoids committing himself to a meeting with speaker A, and to setting a time for that meeting. B is clearly infringing on the maxim of quantity; "Make your contribution as informative as is required". If B observed this maxim by specifying the time at which he would meet A, that would clash with the maxim of quality: "Do not say that which you believe to be false".

Group C: The third group of implicatures Grice identifies (1989: 33) is more prolific as it subsumes four subcategories. This group involves what Grice calls exploitation; "a procedure by

which a maxim is flouted for the purpose of getting in a conversational implicature", without there being a clash with a maxim that the speaker perceives to be of more urgency as it is the case with the second kind of implicatures. To make their implicatures, speakers may flout the first or second submaxims of Quantity, the first or second submaxims of Quantity, the Relation Maxim, or flout one or more of the maxims of Manner.

We relevantly illustrate the latter type of exploitation with the commitment avoidance utterance given by Speaker B in the exchange below. In example (16), two female participants are sitting at a guest table of an upper-middle class wedding ceremony along with eight other invites. Speaker A is not pleased that Speaker B has been invited to the wedding, knowing in advance that participant B is married to a man who has what she considers to be a humble occupation. He is a school security agent. She gossips about speaker B and her lower-level class with the other guests before speaker B joins them. After a little while, A asks B about her husband's occupation so as to publically intimidate her. The following exchange occurs:

(19) A: gu:li lina ʔa suçæd, fæf xəddæm rəʒlək?
Tell us, Souad, what is your husband's job?

B: rəʒli xəddæm mça wizarat ttarbiya lwatʕanija, çlæfʔ?
My husband works with the Ministry of education, why?

A: lla xi: səwəltək.
No, I just asked.

Speaker B has given a vague answer, exploiting Grice's Maxim of Manner. She has reason to think that speaker A intends to humiliate her, and is not merely making a genuine/innocent request for information. The 'us', in "Tell us", is pragmatically very significant and indicates to speaker B the true intentions of her interlocutor. By using the first person plural pronoun 'us', speaker A indicates that she and the rest of the guests sitting at the table are an in-group, and that speaker A is not part of it (clearly due to her lower social class).

The husband spoken about in the exchange is only one agent among a thousand others working for a government institution that consists of several different departments. Therefore, B's general and evasive answer makes the number of possible jobs the husband could be occupying

almost countless. Moreover, the "why?" in B's answer is used to discourage further questions by speaker A, the requester. With all things considered, the assumption of cooperation would allow the addressee and observers of the exchange to recover speaker B's implicature that she does not wish to reveal her husband's occupation, and that she wishes not to be questioned on that matter any further.

Cases where an implicature arises by virtue of special features of the context, and not by virtue of the proposition expressed are cases of particularized conversational implicatures (Grice, 1989: 37). If the inferred implicature is, on the other hand, associated with the use of a certain form of words, then we have a case of generalized conversational implicature. Grice (1989: 38) explains that expressions of the form "*an X*" (as in "a computer") implicate, regardless of the context of utterance, that *X* does not belong to the speaker, or is at least remotely connected to the utterer. Generalized conversational implicatures are in fact the grammatical correlates of particularized implicatures, which, unlike particularized conversational implicatures, require semantic types of inferencing.

In the following exchange, speaker B avoids committing himself/herself to the truth of the assertion he makes through the use of the probability-expressing modal, 'may', and also through the use of a conditional sentence:

(20) A: $\gamma a \quad t l h \acute{e} q \quad \check{c} l i n a \quad l ' l a \quad s ^ { \acute{a} } l ?$

Will you join us at the gym?

B: $n q \acute{e} d \acute{e} r \quad n b \acute{a} n \quad \text{?} i l a \quad q \acute{e} d n i \quad l w \acute{e} q t$

I may show up if I have time .

Grice's theory has formed a basis for subsequent influential theoretical frameworks, such as Brown and Levinson's model of Politeness. The two scholars (1987: 5) view Grice's Cooperative Principle and maxims as being not merely statements of regular patterns in behavior, but as a background, omni-relevant and omni-present presumptive framework for communication. They (ibid.: 5) argue that the presumption of cooperation is robust against any apparent counter-evidence,

for tokens of apparent uncooperative behavior are in fact cooperative at a deeper level; at the level of what is implicated. Thus, they (1987: 6) conclude that the CP allows in fact, and in great part, for the inference of implicatures of politeness.

1.6 Politeness

1.6.1 An Introduction to Politeness Theory

Brown and Levinson's (1975: 47) model integrates what appears to be the preserves of different disciplines as their apparatus links parameters of social structure to linguistic detail. These two factors strongly converge in the study of social interaction, which constitutes the prominent domain of interest and a fundamental research priority for the two authors.

As noted earlier, the work conducted by Brown and Levinson presupposes Grice's view on communication as intention recognition. The two authors (1987: 8) corroborate the Gricean account that an instance of communication is a kind of intention designed to be recognized by the recipient. Their work draws strongly on Grice's idea that what is 'said' is only a part of what is 'meant' (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 49). They (1987:5) also emphasize, in the way Grice does, rational sources for behavior, arguing that no deviation from rational efficient behavior is without reason. For them, politeness phenomena are very often the sort of motivations that induce such apparent deviations from the CP.

The two authors (ibid: 5) contend that, in addition to the Cooperative Principle, mutual awareness of 'face' sensitivities, and the kinds of means-ends reasoning that such awareness generates are crucial in recovering a speaker's polite intentions. Central to Brown and Levinson's theory, and to the topic of our thesis, is the highly abstract notion of 'face', to which we now turn.

1.6.2 Politeness: The Notion of Face

Brown and Levinson (ibid: 61) assume that all competent social members have (a) face and (b) a set of rational capacities that make the inferencing process possible. They (1987: 61) define 'face' as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself, consisting in two related aspects." This notion of 'face', which exists in all human cultures (i.e. it is universal) is

said to have been borrowed from Goffman (1971), and from the English folk term. In this sense, we may speak of losing, gaining, threatening, maintaining, or enhancing face.

Two basic wants or desires that have to do with 'face' are distinguished: (a) the desire for, or right to, non-imposition, non-distraction, and to personal preserves. This is called 'negative politeness' (or negative face), and (b) the desire that the self-image claimed for oneself and one's desires or wants be appreciated and approved of. This corresponds to 'positive politeness' (or positive face) (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61).

There is a clear link between the performance of a commitment/responsibility-avoiding speech act, and the concept of 'face'. In making a commitment-avoidance utterance, the speaker avoids commitment to the truth of an assertion lest the assertion should later be discovered to be false. In this sense, opting for a commitment-avoidance utterance reflects a speaker's desire to maintain harmony, and appreciation, and approval. It is an attempt to preserve positive face. Also, in making a commitment avoidance utterance, as in avoiding committing oneself to a future course of action, the speaker protects his negative face: the need for one's actions and freedom not to be impeded by others.

In the same respect, responsibility-avoiding utterances indicate the speaker's desire to maintain approval. They also serve the speaker in protecting himself from imposition. This is because an accusation (the speech act that typically triggers responsibility-avoidance utterances) consists not only in getting the hearer to recognize that a certain action A, done by H, is against the speaker's interest, but also in getting H to remedy for that action.

An important notion advanced in Brown and Levinson's model of Politeness is *the mutual vulnerability of face*. Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) posit that "people cooperate (and assume each other's cooperation) in maintaining face. The assumption of mutual vulnerability of face means that it is of mutual interest for interactants to support each other's face. Conversational participants have a vested interest in maintaining each other's face, for this enhances the probability of reciprocal facework.

Of relevance it is to note that Brown and Levinson (1987: 62) present their concept of face as a universal concept. They concede (1987: 62) that, while the exact limits to personal territories and the content of face will show cross-cultural variability, the mutual knowledge of face, and the need to orient oneself to it is universal.

Following Brown and Levinson's account, the link between politeness and the cooperative principle becomes obvious as the need for relevance and clarity will often clash with the need for politeness and face-saving. It appears that while the CP accounts for *how* speakers convey their intentions through implication and indirect use of language, Politeness accounts for *why* speakers convey such intentions through implication and indirection.

In view of these assumptions of face and rationality, it follows intuitively that certain kinds of acts inherently threaten face. In the sections that follows, we provide an overview of different kinds face-threatening acts and of the factors that affect participants' assessment of an FTA.

1.6.3 Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs):

1.6.3.1 Types and Strategies of FTAs

Brown and Levinson (1987: 65) define face-threatening acts as "acts that by nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker". They (1987: 65) distinguish between acts that typically threaten positive face and those that threaten negative face. According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 65), the former kind of acts (verbal and non-verbal) consist in a speaker indicating (potentially) that he does not intend to avoid impeding the hearer's freedom of action, and that the latter kind involves the speaker indicating (potentially) that he is indifferent to H's wants or that he has a negative evaluation of some aspect of H's positive face (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 66).

The two authors (1987: 67-8) also distinguish between FTAs oriented to S's face, and those oriented to H's. FTAs that typically threaten S's negative face are instantiated in (1) expressions of thanks, (2) acceptance of H's thanks or apology, (3) excuses, (4) acceptance of offers, (5) responses to H's *faux pas*, and (6) unwilling promises or offers.

Case (6), 'unwilling promises and offers', is relevant to commitment avoidance speech behavior which consists, among other things, in avoiding commitment to a certain future action. In the following exchange, speaker B is unwilling a promise to his interlocutor. He avoids making a commitment regarding the act specified in A's utterance:

(21) A: tsəlləfni wahəd mjti:n dərħəm? byi:tha had səbt, ida kan mumkin
Could you lend me two hundred Dhs? I want it this Saturday if possible.

B: ʔanʃu:f; maŋqdərʃ ŋu:l li:k daba.
I'll see; I can't promise anything now.

A does not want to lend B the requested sum of money, but if such unwillingness shows, he may offend H's positive face.

Brown and Levinson (1987: 68) also identify those acts that threaten the S's positive face. These include (1) apologies, (2) acceptance of a compliment, (3) loss of physical control over the body, bodily leakage, stumbling or falling down, (4) self-humiliation, shuffling or cowering, acting stupid, self-contradictions, (5) confessions, admissions of guilt or responsibility, and (6) non-control of laughter or tears.

Relevant to our concern is category (5) of FTAs, in which speakers run the risk of positive face damage when admitting guilt or responsibility. It is due to this risk of positive face damage that speakers, in general, tend to avoid straightforward admissions of responsibility. The ultimate and overarching purpose behind the language use phenomenon of responsibility avoidance seems to be the need for face-preservation and face-saving. Brown and Levinson (1987: 66-7) enumerate a range of acts involving threat to H's negative and/or positive face. They (1987: 67) argue that there is a clear overlap in their classification because some FTAs intrinsically threaten both negative and positive face (e.g. requests, complaints, threats, etc.). Their classification of acts threatening H's face is summarized thus:

- (i) S may indicate that he has a negative evaluation of some aspect of H's face through:
 - (a) Expressions of disapproval, criticism, contempt or ridicule, complaint,

and reprimands, accusations, and insults.

(b) Contradictions or disagreements, and challenges.

(ii) S may indicate that he is indifferent to H's positive face:

(a) Expressions of violent emotions;

(b) Irreverence, mention of taboo topics;

(c) Bringing of bad news about H, or good news (boasting) about S;

(d) Raising of emotionally divisive topics, e.g. politics, race, religion, etc.;

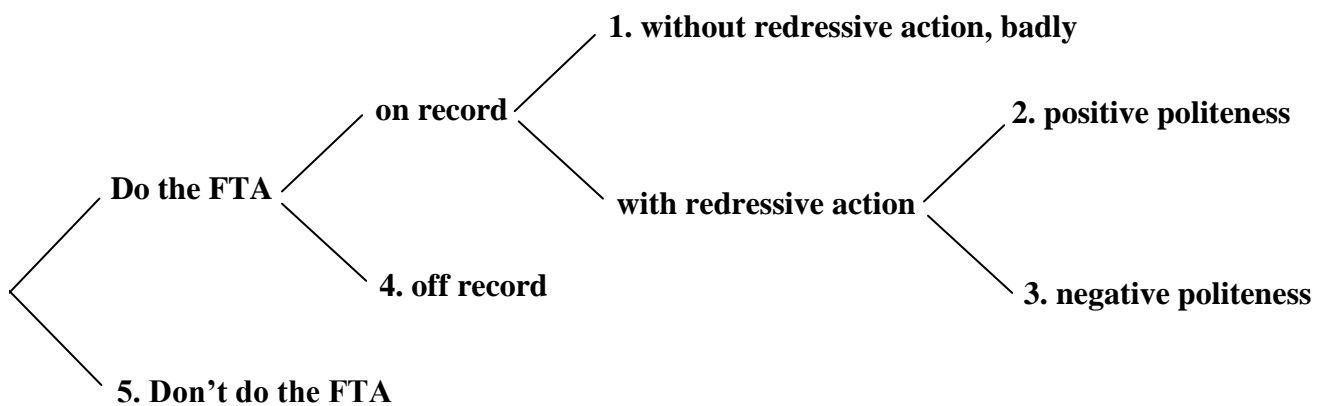
(e) Showing non-cooperation in an activity;

(f) Misidentifying H in initial encounters by accidentally or intentionally using improper address terms and other status-marked identifications.

Another equally important and relevant aspect of Brown and Levinson's theory is the strategies used by speakers for doing FTAs. The chart below presents the repertoire of strategies typically employed by conversational participants to minimize face-threat (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 60):

Fig. (A)

Possible strategies for doing FTAs



According to Fig. (A), a rational participant may either opt to avoid the FTA altogether or to do the FTA, employing one of four strategies, (1) the bald on record, (2) positive politeness, (3) negative politeness, (4) and the off-record strategy. The four strategies are associated with different degrees of face threat; the fourth strategy corresponding to the lowest level of face threat.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 69), a strategy is off-record when more than one intention is attributable to the speaker so that the actor may not be held with certainty to have committed himself to one specific intent. Conversely, the on-record strategy consists in making explicit and unambiguous the speaker's intent (ibid.). This strategy is reminiscent of Austin's notion of the performative (in its classical sense) with the construction 'I hereby V'. The on-record strategy may be employed with or without redressive action (i.e. any action taken by a speaker to support H's face or to counterbalance face-threat). A speaker using the bald on-record strategy does not attempt to minimize the perceived face-threat. Otherwise, redressive action takes one of two forms, depending on which aspect of face is emphasized (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 70).

Accordingly, to redress face, a speaker may use positive politeness strategies, indicating to the hearer that he perceives him as an in-group, and that S wants H's wants. Negative politeness strategies, which are characteristically avoidance-based, consist in indicating to the hearer that S recognizes H's rights to non-imposition and non-distraction, and that H's freedom of action will only minimally be interfered with.

Exchanges (22) and (23) illustrate, respectively, the use of positive and negative politeness strategies in a commitment avoidance utterance:

- (22) A: Iflu:s Ili slløftæk, imta ýatrød hum lijja?
When will you pay me back the money I lent you?
B: ýi: sbør flíjja fwijsa, rak farəf, ʔa xuja, lhala ki dajəra.
Just be patient with me, **brother**, you know how difficult my situation is.
- (23) A: Iflu:s Ili slløftæk, imta ýatrødhum lijja?
When will you pay me back the money I lent you?
B: sməh lijja bzæf, rani farəf rasi bssəlt flí:k ýi sbør flíjja fwijsa.
I am very sorry, I know I have been too imposing, just be a little patient with me.

Brown and Levinson (1987:70) point out that there is a natural tension in negative

politeness between the desire to go on record, thus profiting from all the advantages availed by going on-record, and the desire to suggest non-coerciveness. They (ibid.) suggest that conventionalized indirect strategies reconcile the tension. An example of the use of conventionalized indirectness in a commitment-avoidance utterance is provided in the exchange that follows:

- (24) A: ʔæf bæn li:k, nddiw mwalin ddar lʔifran mj mou3in?
What do you think, should we take our families to Ifrane together?
B: wa ħna ʕand l'lah.
God will decide.

As a matter of fact, the choice of one strategy over another is not made haphazardly, in fact, as Brown and Levinson (1987: 74) have noted, there are factors influencing the choice of strategies. Because these factors are relevant to the topic of our thesis, we have mentioned them in our discussion of the hypothetical speech situations and roles proposed to our respondents in the DCT and Dual-Choice Questionnaire. A characterization of these factors is provided below.

1.6.3.2 Assessing FTAs: Social Distance, Power, and Ranking

Three social variables are identified by Brown and Levinson (1987: 74). These include social distance (D), relative power (P), and ranking of imposition (R). From the outset, the two authors (1987: 74) clarify that their use of D, and P is intended from the point of view of the participant, that is, based on actors'/speakers' assumptions about P and D, and not based on sociologists' ratings of actual Power and Distance. They (1987: 76) define social distance as "the symmetric social dimension of similarity/difference within which S and H stand for the purposes of [an] act". They (1987: 77) further explain that this dimension includes an evaluation of the frequency of interaction between S and H, and the types of material and non-material goods (counting face) exchanged between S and H, or between agents represented by S and H or between representatives of S and H. Power refers to the ability, and degree to which, one interactant can impose his plans and self-evaluation on, and to the detriment of, another interactant's plans or self-evaluation. They (1987: 77) identify two sources of power, material control over economic capital and distribution and over physical force, and metaphysical control over others' actions.

Ranking, on the other hand, concerns the ranking or degree of imposition. In this regard, Brown and Levinson (1987: 77) contend that R is both culturally and situationally weighed and defined by the degree to which the imposition is perceived to interfere with an interactant's wants of approval and freedom of action.

One point especially worthy of note is that situational factors enter into the assessment of P, D, and R, so that valuations of P, D, and R are not stable at all times and for all situations (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 79). They are rather context-dependent. To illustrate, we use Brown and Levinson's (1987) example on assessments of P: They (1987: 78) argue that power may be assigned an absolute value since it is true at all times that a bank manager is regarded as being more powerful than an a lowly worker, such as a bank clerk. The former has a high rating in terms of power, the latter a low one. However, in situations where the bank clerk is a jury member trying the manager, or pulls a gun towards him, or is a union representative, power is reversed.

We may relevantly illustrate how a speaker may favour one responsibility-avoiding strategy over another, depending on the context. We demonstrated earlier in this chapter that responsibility-avoiding utterances are FTAs, for their use may indicate to the hearer that S is contradicting H, and that S is perhaps trying to manipulate H into believing that he is only the victim and not the culprit.

In making a responsibility-avoiding utterance, a speaker will therefore be careful to opt for a responsibility-avoiding strategy that is not insulting to H's intelligence, and that supports H's face. For instance, in a situation where a student is late for class, and feels tempted to avoid responsibility rather than to directly admit his responsibility for coming late, the student may respond, using two different strategies, depending on his knowledge of the teacher's character. To a strict, exacting, and scrupulous tutor, the student may say:

(25) ʔustæd, ra ʒərri:t bæf nwəsʔəl.
Teacher, I've come running to get here on time.

thus using a responsibility-avoiding strategy, by emphasizing effort. To a teacher who is known for being flexible, and easy-going, the student may not feel the need to use the same strategy. Instead, he may choose to say (26) :

(26) ra tssəd ʕlina lbæb.
We were shut out.

which involves self-victimization as a strategy, and which would perhaps have earned the student more trouble had he responded to the stricter tutor in the same way.

In the following section, section [1.7], we append a paper entitled "A Characterization of Commitment Avoidance Utterances" where, as implied in the title, we define non-obligating utterances in terms of illocutionary point. We also contrast non-obligating speech acts to commitment-making illocutionary acts, such as promising and asserting with the intention of identifying points of convergence and divergence between these acts. We also substantiate our discussion of commitment-avoidance speech acts is substantiated with a set of language use examples from both English and MA data.

1.7 A Tentative Characterization of Commitment Avoidance Utterances⁴

1.7.0 Introduction

Based on their observation of language use, Austin (1962: 150-162) and Searle (1979: 12-15; 1975b: 354-361) have established five general categories of language acts. One such category is a special class of illocutionary acts called 'commissives'. According to Searle (ibid: 14) and Austin (ibid: 157), the whole point of a commissive is "to commit the speaker to a future course of action".

It is common for language users to commit themselves to certain courses of conduct, as they do when they make a promise, or to commit themselves to something's being the case, as they do when they make an assertion. It seems, however, even commoner for language users to express their intention to do something without actually undertaking to do it, or to express their belief concerning a certain fact without committing themselves to the truth of their propositions. Austin (ibid: 157) does refer to this phenomenon though only in passing, and observes that 'declarations of intention'

4. Section (1.7) is a revised version of a paper which I (EL Hobz, K., 2016) published in the Canadian International Journal of Social Science and Education, January 2019, Volume 17, pp 26-49.

are different from ‘undertakings’, wondering whether or not they should be classed together. This means that to express the intention to do something is not equivalent to undertaking to do it.

In fact, the problem posed by what I shall call here ‘non-obligating’ utterances is not only one of classification; it is also one of definition. It is not clear whether we are dealing with mere embeddings (in the form of grammatical or lexicographical markers) used within a commissive to indicate weak degrees of commitment, or, instead, whether this type of utterances actually counts as a distinct class of speech acts in its own right. And if the latter is the case, then the question to be asked is whether in issuing a commitment avoidance utterance, we *perform* an action; and if so, what type of act do we then perform in producing/making a commitment avoidance utterance?

1.7.1 Commitment Avoidance Utterances: A Distinct Class

Before we attempt to establish commitment avoidance utterances as a distinct category, it would be appropriate to provide, first, a few illustrative cases of the type of utterances in question.

The data below are instances of commitment avoidance utterances:

(27) I’ll see if I can come tomorrow.

(28) I may lend you the money.

(29) I believe Dave has been absent for more than a fortnight or so.

(30) Well, if I’m not mistaken, the town you’re looking for should be a ten-minute drive from here.

If asked to relate each one of the utterances above to the closest corresponding speech act category in, say, Searle’s (1975b) taxonomy of illocutionary acts, perhaps then an initial reading of (27), (28), (29), and (30) may lead us to conclude that (27) is a commissive whereby the speaker promises ‘to show up the next day’, (28) is also an undertaking ‘to lend some money to the hearer’, (29) is an assertive wherein the speaker asserts ‘that Dave has been absent for a while’, and finally that (30) can similarly be subsumed under the class of ‘assertives’.

Such classification, though sounding adequate at first glimpse, is, to say the least, wholly unsatisfactory. There is clearly a difference between (27) above and (31) below:

(27) I'll see if I can come tomorrow.

and,

(31) I promise that I'll come tomorrow.

One may argue that the difference is only one of strength or force (that is, the strength with which the illocutionary point (purpose of the act) is presented), but this is not the case. In my belief, (31) is a commitment to seeing not to the act (as it is the case with a promise), but is a commitment to consider whether it will be possible for the speaker to come or not. I argue that announcing to come and committing to come are both logically ruled out in utterance (31). Indeed, the speaker is neither announcing the intention to come nor committing to come. In saying "I'll see if I can come tomorrow", what I do is only to announce my intention to consider the possibility of coming tomorrow, but what I also, and most importantly, do is to show the hearer that I don't commit to coming tomorrow; the phrasing is so chosen that the speaker is placed under no obligation to perform the predicated act.

If the point of a promise is the undertaking of an obligation by the speaker to do something, then to say (31) "I promise I'll come tomorrow" is to undertake to come tomorrow. Conversely, the illocutionary point expressed in (27) is exactly the opposite of that expressed in (31). Therefore, to say that (27) is essentially the same as (31) is parallel to "it is and it is not" or "I promise, but I ought not". The two utterances; that is (27) and (31), are not merely different, but are in fact opposite in meaning.

The same is true for (28); the speaker is under no obligation to undertake the predicated act. Similarly, (29) and (30), which are not concerned with a future course of action, but with the expression of a belief, involve lack of commitment by the speaker to the truth of the propositions predicated in their utterances. Instances of commitment avoidance in communication occur both when the speaker chooses to indicate lack of commitment to a future course of action and lack of commitment to an assertion. In fact, commissives (more specifically promises) and assertions are essentially the same because what a speaker *does* by means of making an assertion or a promise is

to make a commitment, and therefore to take responsibility for the truth of the proposition.

So far, I have argued that ‘non-committal’ utterances bear resemblance to a certain degree to promises and assertions, but are still essentially different from both. One way to examine the ways in which ‘non-committal’ utterances are similar to or different from assertions and promises is by looking at the constitutive rules for promising and asserting. This would, to a certain extent, allow us to identify the conditions where ‘non-committals’ converge with assertions and promises and those where they diverge from them.

1.7.1.1 Constitutive Rules: Commitment Avoidance Utterances Vs. Undertakings

Searle (1965: 231-233) states the rules for promising as follows:

Given that a speaker *S* utters as sentence *T* in the presence of a hearer *H*, then, in the utterance of *T*, *S* sincerely (and non-defectively) promises that *p* to *H* if and only if:

(1) *Normal input and output conditions obtain*⁵

(2) *S expresses that p in the utterance of T.*

(3) *In expressing that p, S predicates a future act A of S*

((2) and (3) are called ‘propositional content rules’ (see, Searle (ibid: 231)).

(4) *H would prefer S’s doing A to his not doing A, and S believes H would prefer his*

*doing A to his not doing A*⁶

(5) *It is not obvious to S and H that S will do A in the normal course of events*

(6) *S intends to do A* (this condition is called ‘the sincerity condition’ (See, Searle (ibid: 233))

(7) *S intends that the utterance of T will place him under an obligation to do A.*

In stating the conditions for assertions, Searle (1969: 67) distinguishes between the essential condition of an assertion, and its preparatory and sincerity conditions (for a detailed statement of the rules for assertions, See Searle (1969: 67)

5. Input conditions refer to conditions for intelligible speaking whereas output conditions cover conditions for understanding (e.g. knowing the language, being conscious, not acting under duress or threat, etc) (See, Searle (1965: 231)).

6. this is a crucial distinction between promises and threats; for the promise to be non-defective, the promised act must be something that the H wants done (Searle, 1965: 233).

- (1) *S expresses that P in the utterance of T.*
- (2) *S has evidence (reasons, etc.) for the truth of p. (first preparatory rule).*
- (3) *It is not obvious to both S and H that H knows (does not need to be reminded of, etc.) P (second preparatory rule).*
- (4) *S believes p. (the sincerity rule).*
- (5) *The utterance of T Counts as an undertaking to the effect that p represents an actual state of affairs (the essential condition).*

In view of the conditions (for promises and assertions) listed above, it appears that an important point of convergence shared between assertions and promises, on the one hand, and commitment avoidance utterances, on the other, is the psychological state⁶ expressed in the performance of the illocutionary act, which, according to Searle (1979: 5), corresponds to the sincerity condition of the act. Following this line of thought, the expressed psychological state of ‘belief’ would cover not only assertions, explanations, arguments, and postulations, but also non-obligating expressions of belief (i.e. commitment avoidance utterances). Similarly, the expressed psychological state of ‘intention’ would also cover not only promises, pledges, vows, and threats, but also non-obligating declarations of intention (i.e. commitment avoidance utterances).

Furthermore, the difference between an utterance intended as a promise or an assertion, and a commitment avoidance utterance, relates to the most important feature of the speech acts in question, notably ‘the essential condition’. In the case of ‘promises’, Searle (1965: 234) postulates that intending the utterance as the undertaking of an obligation to perform a certain act is an essential feature of a promise. According to Searle (1965: 234), condition (7) is a distinguishing feature; it is this condition which distinguishes promises from other kinds of speech acts. Consequently, the proposal that utterances accompanied with expressions intended to avoid commitment, but which involve a predicated future act, still count as a promise (though with a weaker strength/commitment than the usual promise) does not hold. Logically, one cannot speak of weak commitment and strong commitment; either there is commitment or there is not.

Compared to assertions, again, a non-committal would differ from an assertion when it comes to its essential rule. According to Searle (1969: 66), asserting that p consists in committing oneself to the truth of p . The commitment principle is what characterizes both assertions and promises. Without ‘the essential condition’, it would not make sense to talk about assertions and/or promises.

Conversely, what constitutes a ‘non-committal’ (or what makes a non-committal possible) is the absence of the obligation to do A , in the case of an expression of an intention to do A , and the absence of commitment to the truth of p , in the case of an expression of a belief that p . Thus, the essential rule for a commitment avoidance utterance may be formulated as follows:

- a. In the case of ‘an expression of an intention’:

S intends that the utterance of T will place him under no obligation to do A

Or as Grice would perhaps prefer to put it:

S intends that the utterance of T will produce in H a belief that S is under no obligation to do A .

- b. In the case of ‘an expression of a belief’:

S intends that the utterance of T will not commit him to the truth of p .

The thread of the argument so far has been to demonstrate that: first, both assertions and promises constitute undertakings although they come under different headings in Searle’s and Austin’s taxonomies of illocutionary acts; and second, commitment avoidance utterances are essentially different from assertions and promises, specifically in illocutionary point or purpose of the act (i.e. the essential condition). Based on this characterisation, we may feel tempted to conclude that commitment-avoidance utterances constitute a single, homogenous class of illocutionary acts, compared to commitment-making speech acts.

Assuming that commitment-avoidance utterances could indeed form a distinct set of illocutionary acts, the question to ask is what kind of utterances are we dealing with here? Are they of the performative or non-performative type?

1.7.2 Commitment Avoidance Utterances: Performative or Non-Performative?

In the perspective of improving our characterisation of commitment avoidance utterances, we shall turn, as was noted above, to the question of whether Austin's "I (hereby) V" formula with the first person singular present indicative active may be applied to commitment-avoidance utterances. The aim is to determine whether commitment avoidance utterances may be reproducible using a special performative verb that names the utterance's illocutionary force. Identifying the performative verb that makes explicit the force of commitment avoidance utterances will enable us to clearly define the kind of act we are doing when avoiding commitment and thereby determine, based on the performative verb used, the category of illocutionary acts to which the utterances in question belong.

1.7.2.1 Austin's and Searle's Accounts of Performativity: A Brief Overview

In his characterization of performative utterances, Austin argues that a performative is, or is a part of, the doing or performing of an action; hence the name 'performative'. Austin (ibid: 5) adds that from a grammatical point of view, performatives tend to have verbs in the first person singular present indicative active. By way of illustration, he (ibid: 5) suggests examples (32) and (33) below:

(32). I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth (_ as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem.)

(33). I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow.

Austin (ibid: 6) argues that to utter these sentences (in the appropriate circumstances) is not to report my saying them or to describe "my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing". Rather, the issuing of the utterance is itself the performing of an action (or the leading incident in the performance of the act). Austin (ibid: 6) explains that when one says 'I do' in a marriage ceremony, for instance, one is not reporting on the marriage or informing about it; rather, one is *indulging* in it. Moreover, questions of truth and falsity with this kind of utterances do not even arise.

While the cases cited above, which involve the typical performative formula ('IV') as in 'I

bet', 'I do', 'I give', 'I bequeath', and 'I name', are the commonest and most straightforward types of performatives, Austin (ibid: 9) sees it fit to add to his list of performatives such utterances as 'I apologize', 'I promise to ...', 'I order you to ...', and 'I pronounce you ...', etc. He (ibid: 9) explains that an utterance in the form of 'I promise to V', for example, is not merely a matter of uttering certain words, but also counts as the doing of an action. In making a promise, my words actually bind me to a certain course of action. Also, in saying 'I order you to leave the room', I am actually performing an order, and not reporting it.

Austin (1962: 133) then engages in an extended argument to show that even assertions and statements may be accommodated within his class of performative utterances, for assertions are not only perfectly reproducible into the formula "I (hereby) V", and are liable to the kinds of infelicity to which typical performatives are prone, but are also performances of actions in the same way promises and bets are.

He adds that even non-performative looking utterances as the ones provided below

A-		B-		C-		D-
(a) Go out!		(a) You did it		(a) I shall be there.		(a) You may go.
(b) out!		(b) Guilty!				

Austin (ibid: 58)

are as much performative as the highly formalized 'I hereby V', for they may be easily reformulated into that construction. Accordingly, I may say 'I find you guilty' instead of 'guilty' or "I promise that I shall be there' instead of 'I shall be there'.

Austin (ibid: 69) calls utterances with a formula that "makes explicit what action it is that is being performed in issuing the utterance" 'explicit performatives'. He (1962: 69) opposes this type of utterances to implicit or 'primary performatives', which correspond to utterances that do not make explicit their illocutionary force. He (ibid: 68) notes, moreover, that the issuing of an utterance is not always equivalent to the doing of something because "the reduction to an explicit performative does not seem always possible."

Another problem with performatives is that the same performative verb may have performative as well as non-performative uses. Note for instance the following utterances:

(a) I thank (b) I am grateful (c) I feel grateful

Austin (1962: 79) posits that while "I thank" is a pure performative, for the speaker is not describing what he did, but is engaging in the act of thanking in issuing that utterance, "I am grateful" is not a pure performative because it is also half- descriptive. "I feel grateful", on the other hand, is purely descriptive; it describes how I feel. Note also Austin's (1962: 78) remark on the performative and non-performative uses of "I approve", which may have the performative force of giving approval in some contexts of use, or may be used in the sense of "I favor this" respectively.

Searle (1989: 537) corroborates Austin's idea, using the examples below.

(34) I always promise to come see you on Wednesday when I meet you on Tuesday.

(35) I promise too many things to too many people.

"I promise" here is a typical performative verb that is used non-performatively in both cases. In utterances (34) and (35), we have cases of the habitual present and not of actual undertakings.

Searle makes another observation, concerning performative utterances. He (1989: 554) argues that one of the central questions to be asked in relation to performatives is why it is that performativity is restricted to only some verbs. He (1989: 538) explains that I can promise by saying 'I promise to', I can order by saying 'I order you to ...', but I can't fix the roof by saying 'I hereby fix the roof' and I don't fry an egg just by saying 'I hereby fry an egg'. Performatives work with only certain verbs and not with others. Why is it that such verbs as 'fry' or 'fix' cannot be used performatively?

Answering his own question, Searle (1989: 554) argues that there is nothing in the semantics of these verbs that should prevent speakers from intending them performatively. If, for instance, a speaker says:

(36) I hereby end all wars.

the utterance would be non-performative, not due to semantic limitations, but due to the facts of

nature that limit the ability of Mankind in this way. If, on the other hand, it is God who utters the same utterance, the utterance would then be performative because it is possible for God to make such a change in the world only by virtue of saying the words.

Searle (1989: 552) also notes that another central question that philosophers have been oblivious about is: How or by what means do we perform an action just by saying something? He (1989: 552) then argues that since an essential constitutive feature of any illocutionary act is the intention to perform that act, then for all speech acts, the act in question is performed solely by manifesting the intention to do it. He (1989: 552) suggests that “we perform a type of illocutionary act by uttering a type of sentence that encodes the intention to perform an act of that type”. This means that in the case of a directive, for instance, the intention of the speaker is to get the hearer to do something. The manifestation of this intention is linguistically encoded in the utterance.

Searle (1989: 552) further adds that the difference between performative utterances and non-performative ones is that, in the case of explicit performatives, the intention of the speaker is that the utterance itself should constitute the performance of the act named by the verb. In this sense, explicit performatives are self-referential. Thus, when I say “I hereby order you to go”, I mean that “by this-here-very utterance, I make it the case that I order you to go”. The utterance is a manifestation of the intention to order you to go, and is itself the performance of the act named by the verb. This is why performatives characteristically take “hereby.”

1.7.2.2 Commitment Avoidance Utterances and Performativity

Now, taking into account Austin’s and Searle's analyses, if we may apply the formula "I V that", "I V to", or "I V" *simpliciter* to non-obligating utterances, we end up with constructions of this sort:

(37) I (hereby) do not commit myself to doing A / I (hereby) do not commit myself to the truth of *p*

or

(38) I (hereby) intend to do A, but do not undertake to do it/ I (hereby) believe that *p*, but do not commit myself to the truth of *p*.

If commitment avoidance utterances can be used performatively, then an utterance like ‘I may come tomorrow’ should be reproducible without a problem into ‘I hereby do not commit to coming tomorrow’. Clearly, the test fails; the utterance sounds non-idiomatic. The reason behind this is that ‘hereby’ does not collocate with a verb in the negative form.

Still, does this mean that when I indicate in a sentence lack of commitment, I am uttering words in a vacuum? When I show lack of commitment in an utterance, am I not uttering these words to a certain effect and do they not take effect once received by the hearer?

Drawing on the analyses overviewed above, we could at least start asking the right questions about commitment avoidance utterances. I believe a central question about this kind of utterances (i.e. utterances with a commitment avoidance illocutionary point) is "What is it that we exactly do, or what act are we actually performing, if we perform any, when we avoid commitment?" Let us consider, for instance, the following examples:

(39) I’ll lend you the money if I get it

(40) I’ll marry you if my family approves

(41) I may show up; it depends.

What I do in producing utterance (39) is to let the hearer know that I will lend him the money when I get it. What I do in uttering (40) is to let the hearer know that I will marry her (or him) if and only if my parents accept. And, finally, in making utterance (41), what I exactly do is again to let the hearer know that I may show up the next day and that it depends, on what? It is not clear. There is a certain degree of ambiguity about the speaker’s real intention in every one of the utterances above. (39), (40), and (41) all imply that the speaker may or may not do A. There is no explicit, definitive commitment. It is not known whether I will lend the money or not, whether I will marry or not, whether I will show up tomorrow or not. It doesn’t matter whether, at the moment of speaking, the speaker is sincere about the conditions upon which he says that his will depends or whether he only makes those conditions up; even if it mattered, it would prove impossible to know what one really has in mind if it does not manifest, directly or indirectly, in his talk. What is of

interest to us is what manifests itself linguistically. In all three utterances, my intention as to doing or not doing the predicated future act is not made clear. The only intention that is clear in (39), (40), and (41) is that I intend to 'let' the hearer 'know' or to 'inform' him or to 'state' that I may or may not lend the money, that I may or may not marry, and that I may or may not show up the next day, respectively. My intention is to make a statement about the potentiality or possibility of p and to create therefore in the hearer a state of uncertainty concerning p . The speaker is made to expect either $+p$ or $-p$ to an equal degree.

In view of the analysis presented above, it appears that non-obligating utterances are statements and, therefore, performatives. They are 'performances of statements'. It is also of interest to note that it is not common for utterances of this type to be prefixed by an explicit performative verb like 'I state that ...' though it is perfectly possible to say :

(42) I state that or inform you that it is not certain that I will come tomorrow,

which also corresponds to

(43) I intend to inform you that it is not certain that I will come tomorrow

Though a statement has an assertive illocutionary point, in the case of commitment avoidance utterances, what the speaker intends to assert, or purposes to present, is a future state of affairs where two candidate possibilities are applicable to an equal degree.

Through our analysis of commitment avoidance utterances, we have established the status of these utterances as statements, and may also confirm that the use of 'I state' or 'I inform' with utterances which have a commitment avoidance pragmatic intent have a performative use, for the assertion the speaker makes is not made with any historical reference, and also because that statement or assertion does take effect as do other performative utterances.

Arguing for the status of assertions and statements as performatives, Austin (1962: 138) contends that "once we realize that what we have to study is not the sentence, but the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation, there can hardly be any longer a possibility of not seeing that stating is performing an act". Other than arguing that there is no conflict between utterances being true or

false, and their being performatives, as demonstrated by the example "I warn you that the bull is going to charge", Austin further posits that stating truly is parallel to arguing soundly, judging fairly, blaming justifiably, and advising well, for these illocutionary acts have to do with facts in one way or the other. He (ibid: 142) adds that in the same way that the soundness or correctness of an argument and the meritedness of a blame are matters of contention, so are judgments of truth and falsity. Saying that a statement is either true or false and that judgments of truth and falsity are objective and definitive is oversimplistic (Austin, ibid; 140). In this connection, he (ibid: 142) notes that a statement as "France is hexagonal" may be true for a general, but not for a geographer. And similarly, what may be judged true in a schoolbook may not be so in an historical research. In stating, as in the issuance of any other utterance-act, we perform perlocutionary acts of all kinds, our words are made to a certain effect, and it is necessary to secure uptake.

In view of these arguments, we may establish on firmer grounds our claim that commitment avoidance utterances, which we characterize as statements, are performative utterances. Of interest is to note that a close examination of commitment avoidance utterances indicates that they are a special kind of statements because they do not share with statements in their typical potential for truth and falsity. The reason for this is that they are not statements about pre-existing facts or state of affairs. They are rather statements concerned with a potential future event. Put differently, these statements are not reports or descriptions of facts, but are statements of conditioned intentions, and therefore resist verification.

Finally, we want to reassert that the ambient purpose behind commitment avoidance speech behaviour is politeness. Whether in making his utterance, a speaker presents a state of affairs where the truth of P_1 entails the truth of P_2 , as in a conditional sentence, or where the occurrence of P_+ and P_- are both equally possible, as expressed in the use of a probability-expressing modal, or through other means, his purpose is one: to indicate to the hearer that his utterance is a non-obligating one. His purpose is to avoid commitment for the ultimate and more overarching purpose of face preservation in case the asserted proposition is found false, or the promise is not kept.

1.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed a number of concepts relevant to Speech Act Theory, in general, and to politeness theory, in particular. These theories and the key concepts associated with them have been discussed in relation to the works of Austin (1962) and Searle (1965, 1969, 1975b, 1985), and also of Grice (1975, 1989) and Brown and Levinson (1987). In the process, we have illustrated some of the theoretical aspects discussed by examples relevant to our research. The aim is to foreground, and provide better insight into, the topic of our thesis, namely, commitment/responsibility avoidance speech acts.

Section [1.7] has provided theoretical groundwork for the problem of defining non-obligating utterances and for their classification. We have examined a set of commitment avoidance utterances in terms of their illocutionary point to determine whether this type of utterances has the function of a commissive with only a weakened degree of commitment, or they form a distinct class of utterances. To this end, a number of sample utterances illustrating commitment-avoidance speech acts is provided and analyzed. In addition, we have attempted to state the constitutive rules of non-obligating utterances and of promises and assertions, in the perspective of identifying points of divergence between commitment-avoiding illocutionary acts and commitment-making utterances.

Based on an analysis of the constitutive rules relevant to promises, on the one hand, and to assertions, on the other, we came to the conclusion that commitment avoidance utterances are essentially different from both assertions and promises, particularly in terms of their illocutionary point or purpose.

In our attempt to identify the performative verb that makes explicit the force of a commitment avoidance utterance. We have relied on Austin's and Searle's works on 'performativity' and, thereupon, concluded that non-obligating utterances are underlyingly statements, and are, therefore, performative and implicit/primary in character. Finally, although we have characterized utterances with a commitment avoidance illocutionary intent as statements, we have noted that they have the look of a special class of utterances because, unlike typical statements, they are not verifiable.

Chapter Two: Research Design and Methodology

2. Research Design and Methodology

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research paradigm used in the study. It shows how the major parts of the research project, including measurement, sampling, and classification and analysis procedures, work combinedly to address the central research questions in the study.

The chapter begins with a consideration of the research variables targeted by the study, specifying their type, and on their bases, specifying the nature of the research framework as a whole. It also outlines the measurement methods used to address these variables and posits a rationale for using them. Another major aim of this chapter is to describe in detail the questionnaire items used for gathering the relevant data. Each speech situation is described in terms of the roles assigned to the interlocutors involved in the situation⁷, the setting, and also in terms of Brown and Levinson's (1987) social variables of distance, relative power, and ranking of imposition. As standard procedure, each situational prompt is given a phonetic transcription and non-literal (pragmatic) translation into English. The sampling frame, target population, and the procedures used for data classification and analysis are also among the issues considered in this chapter.

2.1 Research Questions: Defining Our Variables

In principle, any systematic inquiry consists in posing a question or a set of questions, collecting relevant information to answer them, and eventually presenting answers to those questions. Research questions are, in fact, the foci of our research study; they enable the researcher to have and maintain a sense of purpose throughout the research process.

The centrality of research questions stems not only from the fact that they are

7. Role-taking is a role-based procedure where the respondent imagines himself or herself in a presented situation. The results yielded by this procedure pertain to the respondent's anticipated or hypothetical behavior or to how they think they would behave if they were in the real situation.

associated with the specific issues addressed in the study, but also from the fact that ‘good’ research is one that relates the research objectives and questions to the major findings of the study. An appropriate narrowing of the scope of a research study into specific research questions and objectives has, in this sense, incidence on every decision the researcher makes subsequently, including selecting the sample, determining the type(s) of data to be collected, and the most appropriate instruments used to measure them. Even the analysis and interpretation of data is done in such a way as to verify whether the findings support the preliminary hypotheses of the research, or otherwise, refute them.

We wish, therefore, to begin our discussion of the methodological framework of the study by providing a detailed elaboration on the research questions, and on the variables contained in each of them as a methodological priority.

2.1.1 Research Question (1): Defining the first variable

The first research question addressed by the study reads as follows: (1) In speech situations involving face-threat, do speakers of MA tend to make commitment/responsibility-avoiding utterances or do they, instead, use commitment-making utterances?

The variable, associated with research question (1), is ‘*a language act*’, which the respondents are expected to make in reaction to the proposed speech situations. The language act we envisage to trigger may correspond either to ‘a commitment/responsibility avoidance utterance’, which is the target utterance, or to a straightforward ‘commitment-making or responsibility-admitting utterance’.

We measure the first variable by means of a dual-choice questionnaire, which provides the respondents with two-response options for each of the different situational prompts included in the questionnaire. These options are represented by response categories (A) and

(B), which must and do correspond to the variables we measure, consisting mainly in the target utterance and its inverse, respectively.

The kind of situational prompts we provide in the dual-choice questionnaire is highly conditioned by the nature of research question (1), for an important part of that question is that the target language behavior is assumed to be typically triggered by a face-threatening act. Consequently, the situational prompts we have constructed essentially involve face-threatening acts, such as requestive acts and reproaches.

2.1.2 Research Question (2): Defining the Second Variable

The second research question is a subsidiary of the first. It is formulated thus:

(1) Is the commitment/responsibility - avoiding speech behavior of native of Moroccan Arabic influenced by the social variables of sex, age, and level of education?

Research question (2) involves two kinds of variables; a dependent variable corresponding to the participants' *'responsibility/commitment avoidance speech behavior'*, and three independent variables, corresponding to the social parameters of *'sex'*, *'age'*, and *'level of education'*.

Of note is that the second research question differs from the first in that the former is correlational in nature while the latter is descriptive. The aim of the first research question is to describe the respondents' linguistic behavior in reaction to a specific stimulus or prompt. By contrast, the purpose of the second is to determine whether the social variables of sex, age, and level of education correlate with the displayed behavior.

The second research question assumes the existence of a potential cause-and-effect relationship between the social variables just noted and any observable pattern of responses relating to commitment/responsibility avoidance speech behavior. Research question (2) dictates therefore that the data be classified in accordance with these social parameters. For

this purpose, the respondents have indeed been asked to provide information about their sex, age, and level of education at the beginning of the dual-choice questionnaire

2.1.3 Research Question (3): Defining the Third Variable

The third, and last, research question runs as follows: (3) What output strategies do speakers of MA use to realize their commitment/responsibility-avoiding utterances?

This variable is concerned with ‘the *output strategies* used for the realization of commitment/responsibility-avoiding utterances’ by native speakers of Moroccan Arabic. Given that the focus of this research question is on output strategies, measurement of this variable requires the administration of a production task. The instrument that is most adequate for eliciting this variable is the DCT, which typically has an unstructured response format.

Given the nature of the variables outlined above, we may argue that other than being descriptive and correlational in nature, the present research work belongs to the category of primary research in that the data collected for the purposes of the study are derived from primary sources of information, namely, native speakers of Moroccan Arabic. It is also confirmatory in that the study advances a number of hypotheses to be tested through the gathering and analysis of field data. Such hypotheses include (1) the assumption that there is a tendency among speakers of MA to make commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances in response to requests and reproaches, and (2) the assumption that there is a causality relationship between the social variables taken into account by the study and the language behavior in question. The study may also be described as being exploratory in some respects, for the commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies which the study aims to identify are yet unexplored, and constitute a knowledge gap in pragmatic research.

Having expanded on the research questions of the study and defined the measurement tools designed for collecting the relevant data, we now move on to provide a detailed overview of the research methods adopted in this research work.

2.2 Instrumentation

2.2.1 The Dual-Choice Questionnaire

This research work implements a survey method plan which is typically used to provide a quantitative description of a trend, attitude, or opinion of a population by studying a sample of that population (Creswell, 2014: 155). Given that one of the major goals of the study is to reach generalizable conclusions about the existence or non-existence of a trend among the population sampled for the study, a closed questionnaire is judged to be quite appropriate for our purposes, as it will enable us to probe the participants' reactions to specific speech situations, with the aim of describing the general tendency, trend, or pattern emerging from such reactions. As noted earlier, this trend may be either avoidance-oriented or commitment-oriented.

Favoring the use of a questionnaire is also founded on advantages relating to efficiency and control. Typically, questionnaires allow for quantification, and control of certain variables (control over features of the situation for example). Because it is a highly constrained instrument of data collection (Golato, 2003: 92), it is far less time-consuming than observation of natural discourse occurring in real situations.

We are aware that a number of scholars, including (Kasper, 2000; Yuan, 2001; Wolfson and Manes, 1980), have commented on the non-interactive, and therefore inauthentic nature of the data obtained through questionnaires in pragmatics research, pointing out its failure to capture dynamic discourse features (cf. Adolphs, 2008: 22). However, we maintain that the advantages offered by questionnaires far outweigh their disadvantages. We also believe that rigor is in questionnaire item construction (by providing sufficient contextual social clues, for example), on the one hand, and in questionnaire administration, on the other, is apt to aid in overcoming the shortcomings generally associated with the use of questionnaires.

The dual-choice questionnaire used in this research work presents the respondents with situations in which the target utterance is expected or believed to be the next relevant act. Each item in the questionnaire comprises a dual-option idiographic response format, where the first response option functions as the target utterance (i.e. a commitment/responsibility avoidance utterance) and the second as a commitment-making or a responsibility-admitting utterance. The number of answer choices that a respondent is required to select is limited to a single option. The reason for this is that the given choices are intended as opposites, and logically, respondents would not select the option of their choice and its inverse at the same time. It is of note, however, that we provide the respondents with a blank space in which they are asked to produce/formulate their own answer in case none of the given options corresponds to it.

The questionnaire includes four request situations, four reproach situations, and two situational prompts in which the two speech acts, namely a request and an accusation, are combined. Typically, requestive acts involve the speaker in asking for information or in attempting to get H to do some future act A. Requests belong to the category of directives. They require compliance, in principle. Therefore, they are potentially impositive acts.

Reproach situations, on the other hand, involve S in expressing displeasure, annoyance, and therefore censure, as a reaction to a past or ongoing action by H, which is perceived by S as affecting him unfavorably, and for which he holds H responsible (Olshtain and Weinbach, 1993: 108).

Typically again, requests are responded to either by acceptance or refusal. We believe, however, that there is empirically observable evidence to the effect that, in MA talk exchanges, requests are very often responded to with a commitment avoidance utterance, by means of which the speaker either avoids to comply with, or refuses the request. The requests used in our questionnaire are intentionally aimed at having the respondent select one

of two response options: response category (A), which involves the target utterance (i.e. a commitment or a responsibility avoidance utterance), or response category (B), which is a direct refusal or acceptance of the request.

In cases where we have requests for information rather than for action, the respondents are expected to either select an assertive utterance (i.e. a commitment to an unambiguous proposition), or an utterance in which they do not commit to any specific assertion.

On the other hand, the reproach situations used in our questionnaires are intended to have the respondent select either a responsibility-avoiding utterance, represented by response category (A), or an utterance involving an admission of responsibility, represented by response category (B).

2.2.2 The Discourse Completion Test (DCT)

The use of a DCT is relevant to the second major research question of the study. The purpose of this research question is to explore and identify the pragmalinguistic strategies used in performing commitment/responsibility-avoidance language acts.

As noted above, and earlier in the General Introduction, the DCT involves the same request and blame speech situations or prompts used in the dual-choice questionnaire, but essentially differs from the latter in terms of format. In the DCT, no input is provided because our purpose is to collect a large and varied corpus of respondent-formulated commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances, in the perspective of identifying the output strategies used for making such utterances.

Being essentially a type of questionnaire, DCTs are credited with the same advantages as questionnaires, and are also criticized for the same reasons: (a) Allowing for efficiency in terms of time consumption, (b) variable control and ease of quantification, and (c) not reflecting real-time interaction. Additionally, DCTs typically allow the researcher to examine

the produced language act at full-range, and to collect a wide range of responses, especially from large population samples. We consider that, since DCTs are used in investigations of speech-act strategies, our use of a DCT as a data collection instrument in this research is a valid choice. Kasper and Rose (2002: 95-96) explain that:

[W]hen carefully designed, DCTs provide useful information about speakers' *pragmalinguistic knowledge* of the strategies and linguistic forms by which communicative acts can be implemented, and about their *sociopragmatic knowledge* of the context factors under which particular strategic and linguistic choices are appropriate.

Kasper and Rose (2002: 95-96)

It is relevant to note, in this connection, that the respondents are asked to respond to the DCT questionnaires prior to the dual-choice questionnaires so that their answers or utterance structures are not influenced by the options provided in the dual-choice questionnaire. In the following section, we describe at length, and comment on, the ten situational prompts used in the study. Because the situational prompts have been administered in Moroccan Arabic, we have phonetically transcribed both the proposed prompts and response options, and also translated the transcribed items into English using a 'communicative' (pragmatic) translation rather than a 'semantic'/literal one (See Newmark, 1982) ⁸.

2.3 Description of the Situational prompts

To probe the respondents' commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances, we use a range of real-world settings and social situations, including the 'money-borrowing' situation and the 'parent-to-child, or child-to-parent reproach' situations, which, like several other other situations, have real-life analogues.

In the DCT, the situational prompts are designed and described below in terms of the key factors outlined in Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory, including social

8. In his *Approaches to Translation*, Newmark (1982: 39) defines 'communicative translation' as one which attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original". It aims at preserving the pragmatic force of the translated message. By contrast, 'literal translation' is a word-for-word translation. The latter type of translation "does not require cultural adaptation" (Newmark, 1982: 63).

distance between S and H, their relative dominance or power, and degree of imposition of the act in question.

2.3.1 Description of Setting (1)

Fig. 1

1. ftarəd ʔanak wsʕəlti mʕəttʕəl ləlxədma ʃi nhar. ʔa ʕəndək lmudi:r djalək u galli:k: “həd ttəʕtʕal djalək rah ma maqbbulʃ! ʔlæʃ t- ʕəʕtʕalti?” ʃnu mumkin jku:n lʔawa:b djalk? Waf (l) ʔaw (ʔ) :

(l)- mʃa ʔlijja ttran
(ʔ)-sʕaraħa, sʕbəht nəʕʕəs

ʔi:da ʕəndək ʃi ʔawəb ʔaxur mən ʕi:r lʔaʔwiba lmuqtaraħa ʕli:k, dʕefha fhəd lfaræy :

1. Suppose you arrived late at work one day. Your boss called you and said to you: "Your arriving late to work is unacceptable. Why were you late?" What would your answer be? Is it (A) or (B)?

(A)- The train left me behind
(B)- I overslept.

If you have an answer other than the ones suggested to you, add them in this blank:

The speech situation in Setting (1) presupposedly occurs in a work setting. It is a reproach situation, in which S, who initiates the exchange, expresses a grievance toward H concerning H's behavior, namely, his arriving late at work. The respondent, who assumes the hypothetical role of employee in this situation, is placed in a lower-status role vis-à-vis his boss. The setting is formal, and the assumed degree of familiarity between S and H is not high, because it is understood that employer/manager relationship is limited to the work context. The two participants are socially distant given that the frequency of their interaction

is assumed to be limited to work-related topics. S is in a position of authority over H; he, therefore, has more power over H.

Assuming that the contextual assessment outlined above corresponds to the respondents' evaluation of the speech situation as a whole, the respondents are required to provide the second turn of dialogue by selecting from the two given/provided response options. They select either response category (A) or (B) in accordance with what they perceive to be most appropriate to the given context. Option (A) corresponds to a responsibility avoidance utterance choice, while option (B) corresponds to a direct admission of responsibility choice.

2.3.2 Description of Setting (2)

Fig. 2

2. nta/nti mudərri:b(a) djal fari:q djal kurat lqadam. ləʃbæt lfərqa djalək u xəsərtu lmætʃ fmədi:ntkum. Səwlək wəhd sʰahafi: "ʃlæʃ xəsərtu lma:tʃ? lʒumhu:r makænʃ mət wəqəʃ həd nnatizə. ʃnu ɣatfəddʰəl dʒawəb?

(1)- məssəʃəfnæʃ lhədʰ.

(↔)- ma kənnæʃ fəl mustawa.

ʔi:da ʃəndək ʃi ʒawəb ʔaxur mən ɣi:r lʔaʒwiba lmuqtaraħa ʃli:k, dʰefha fhəd lfarəɣ :

2. You are the coach of a football team. Your team has played and lost the game in your city. One journalist asked you: "Why did you lose the match? The audience was not expecting this score." What would you rather answer?

(A)-We were unlucky.

(B)- We were not up to it.

If you have an answer other than other the answers suggested on you, add them in this the blank:

Situation (2) also involves an expression of dissatisfaction and disappointment, and can, as such, be interpreted as a reproach. S (a reporter in this situation) indicates to H (a

football team coach) that the results of the football match did not meet the expectations of the public. The S in Situation (2) may be taken to be expressing not only his own disappointment with H's team's performance, but also that of the team supporters. S and H are engaged in a post-game interview. Because this speech situation involves a televised interview, we may consider the setting to be an institutional/formal setting. The level of familiarity that the two interlocutors have relative to one another is low. The two interlocutors are, therefore, socially distant. The relative social statuses of the interlocutors would be irrelevant in this case, because neither participant has authority over the other. We may, however, consider the reporter to be in a position of power because he represents the general public and asks his questions on their behalf. Also, if we accept the view that media is power, then, by implication, we must accept the fact that the person holding the mike is in a position of power. In the responses suggested, (A) and (B) correspond, respectively, to a responsibility-avoidance utterance, and a responsibility-admitting utterance.

2.3.3 Description of Setting (3)

Fig. 3

3. lʒa:r djalək tʰləb mənnək tsəlfu tʰomobil bæʃ jəqdʰi bi:ha ʃi ɣaradʰ. gallik: "ra ʒəndi ʃi ɣaradʰ ftʰanʒa hæd lwi:kand u məhtæʒ f tomobi:ltək . wæʃ mumkin tsəlləfha lijja?" mən hæd lʒawabajn lmuqtaraħajn, ʃnu təxta:r?

(A)- mən hna ldi:k lwəqt jħi:n lla:h.

(B)- sməħlija, makansəlləf tomobilti

ʒi:da ʒəndək ʃi ʒawæb ʔaxur mən ɣi:r lʔaʒwiba lmuqtaraħa ʒli:k, dʰef ha fhæd lfaræɣ : _____

3. Your neighbour asked you to lend him your car so that he may run some errands with it. He told you: "I have some errand to run in Tangiers this weekend and I need your car. Can you lend it to me?" Of the two responses suggested, which one would you rather choose?

(A)- We'll see about it when the time comes.

(B)- Sorry, I do not lend my car.

If you have an answer other than the ones suggested to you, add them in this blank:

Unlike the preceding situations, Situation (3) involves the making of, and responding to, a request. In the context set in Setting (3), S and H are neighbors. The setting is informal, and the assumed level of familiarity between the two interlocutors is relatively high. The utterance eliciting the respondents' response can be characterized as a conventionally indirect request. In connection with the latter type of requests, Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989), draw a distinction between three basic strategy types used in making requestive acts. For example, a request of the sort "I request that you open the door" made with an explicit illocutionary force is a direct request. Where the requester refers to the contextual preconditions necessary for the performance of the request in ways that are routinized in the language, we have a case of a conventionally indirect request. "Could you please open the door?" is an example of conventional indirectness in requestive acts. The third type of strategies, non-conventional indirect requests, are interpretable through contextual clues rather than linguistic ones. That a guest says to a host that "All the windows are closed." may count as a non-conventional indirect request to open the windows.

The degree of imposition involved in 'the car-borrowing request' given in Setting (3), and which we have described as a conventionally indirect request, is high. Two options are provided for the respondents; a commitment-avoidance utterance represented by response category (A), and a straightforward refusal, represented by response category (B).

2.3.4 Description of Setting (4)

Fig. 4

4. nta ʕəndək wəhəd lʒa: ra katəsmə u katʃu:f ʕli:ha ʃi h̄wajəʒ maməʒjaninʃ.
wəhəd nha: r, ʒa wəhəd raʒəl u galli:k: "ʔi:n ʃæ? l'lla:h, ana nawi nətzuwəʒ
ʒarətʃum. ʕəfæk bæʃ tənəs'əhni?" fməwqi:f fhæl hada, ʃnu ʔa tʒawəb?

(أ) lla:hu ʔaʕlam, ʔa sidi.

(ب)- di:k lbənt matəs'la:hʃ lzwaʒ.

ʔi:da ʕəndək ʃi ʒawəb ʔaxur mən ʔi:r lʔaʒwiba lmuqtaraħa ʕli:k, dʕef ha f
həd lfarəy : _____

4. You have a female neighbor whose reputation is not good. One day, a man came to you and said: " If God wills, I intend to marry your neighbor. What do you advise me?" In a situation such as this one, what would you answer? :

(A)- God knows best, Sir.

(B)- That girl is not good for marriage.

If you have an answer other than the answers suggested to you, add them in this blank:

Gathering information about a wife(or husband)-to-be is still a common practice in Morocco, though less so compared to the past. Setting (4) is a hypothetical request situation, which involves the respondent in a conversational exchange with a non-intimate. The participants are socially distant (unfamiliar), and neither has power over the other. Speaker 1 giving the first turn of dialogue in Situation (4) is making a request for information about the respondent's neighbor; a woman the stranger intends to marry , but he wishes to have some background information about her before making a final decision. Setting (4) is, therefore, a possible real-life situation. Utterance (A) "God knows best" may be used to express humility and modesty, but in the given context of Situation (4), the utterance has a commitment avoidance pragmatic intent. In utterance (B), the speaker makes a straightforward assertion.

2.3.5 Description of Setting (5)

Fig. 5

5. xərʒu nnataʔiʒ djal lmtihanæt. lqiti rasək sʔa:qətʔ. suwlək lʔab djalək:
"ʔamədʔra? nnataʔi:ʒ huma haduk wla fhāl lʔæm lli fæt?" ʃnu ya tʒawəb?

(l)- lʔasatida kulhum ma- kajhəmluni:ʃ. səqtoni, maʔrəftʃ ʔlæʃ.

(ʔ)- manʒəhtʃ həd lʔæm

ʔi:da ʔænd -ək ʃi ʒawəb ʔaxur mən yi:r l- ʔaʒwiba lmuqtaraħa ʔli: k, dʔef ha fhəd lfarəy : _____

5. Exam results have been posted, and you found out that you failed. Your father asked you: "So? What's the news? Were the results good or are they the same as last year's?" What would you answer?

(A)- The teachers hate me. They gave me a failing mark. I don't know why.

(B)- I did not make it this year.

If you have an answer other than the ones suggested to you, add them in this blank:

In Situation (5), the interactants are assigned father-son roles. They, therefore, count as intimates, and their relative power is asymmetrical. Though the main speech act performed in Situational prompt (5) is a request for information, the prompt involves, in addition to a requestive act, an explicit blame to H. The degree of face-threat involved is very high, for the respondent/hearer is required to reveal information he knows is displeasing to S, and damaging to H's both negative and positive face. The threat involved in S1's request for information about H's exam results is aggravated by S1's reference to H's last year's disappointing results. In response options (A) and (B), the respondent is provided with a responsibility-avoiding utterance, and a responsibility-admitting utterance, respectively. In utterance A, the blame for failure is not on deity or on luck, as in situations (1) and (2) above, but on a group of individuals, the teachers.

Of note is that an important element in any commitment avoidance utterance is the securing of safe cover. Blaming a person that is reachable and who may easily expose one is not sufficiently protective as cover. The blame/responsibility in this situation is, therefore, not attributed to any specific teacher, but is placed on an indistinguishable group of teachers. Generalizing the blame makes the non-committal ambiguous as it generally is; therefore, securing S's interests. It does not matter whether or not the father doubts his son's justification; what matters is that the father cannot prove his son wrong. All that the father learns from utterance (A) is that his poor son has been the victim of a group of conspiring,

grudge-holding teachers. Yet, this generalization may weaken the protective power of the commitment avoidance utterance because it may not sound plausible that all the teachers have conspired for no reason against a singled out student. Conversely, in utterance (B), the son (S2) explicitly/directly admits responsibility for his failure in the exams.

2.3.6 Description of Setting (6)

Fig. 6

6. Wsælti mʃætʰəl ləl mtihæn. suwlək lʔustæd: "ʃlæf wsʰlti mʃætʰəl?" xta:r wahəd mən hæd lʒawæbajn:

(l̥)- hræb ʃlijja ttʰobi:s
 (ʷ)- zgəlt ttʰobis

ʔi:da ʃændək ʃi ʒawæb ʔaxur mən ʔi:r lʔaʒwiba l muqtaraħa ʃli:k, dʰef ha fhæd lfaræʔ :

6. You arrived late for the exam. Your teacher asks you: "Why are you late?" Choose one of these options for a reply:

(A)- The bus left me behind
 (B)- I missed the bus

If you have an answer other than the answers suggested to you, add them in this blank:

In Setting (6), the respondent is involved in a student/teacher conversational exchange, in which the respondent is assigned the role of student. The general assessment associated with the role-set of teacher/student is that the teacher has authority over the student. The interlocutors involved in this situation are socially distant, given their unequal statuses. The context (i.e. school or university) framing the exchange is institutional and, therefore, formal. In Setting (6), the respondent is late for the exam, and is required to react to the teacher's indirect reproach and direct inquiry about the reason for his lateness.

The two response options provided as input to the respondents are a responsibility avoidance utterance (A), and a statement in which S admits responsibility for the blamable past action (utterance B). The structure of utterance (A) is such that the agency, and therefore responsibility, of the speaker is obscured. In utterance (B), by contrast, the speaker directly assumes responsibility for being late as the pronoun referring to the speaker is placed in subject position.

2.3.7 Description of Setting (7)

Fig. 7

7. Mu:dda hadi w nta/nti mæxt^u:b lwaḥəd lbənt/wəld. mfa lwəqt wəlliti fækk(a) ʔanna həd faxəs^s huwwa fʔari:k ləmunəsib ləlhjatək w həssiti annak məḥtəz wəqt ktər baʔ taxud qarar. wəḥəd nha:r, suwlək həd faxəs^s : "ʔimta ʔadi nətzəwʔu?" fnu ʔa tʔawəb?

(¹)- nha: r lli jəbyi lla:h.

(²)- mazəl məḥtəʔ wəqt nfəkkər.

ʔi:da fəndək fi ʔawəb ʔaxur mən ʔi:r lʔaʔwiba lmuqtaraḥa fli:k, d^sef ha fhəd lfarəʔ :

7. It has been a while since you have been engaged to a girl/boy. Over time, you started doubting whether this person is the right life partner for you and felt you need more time before you make a final decision. One day, this person asks you: "When shall we get married?" What would you answer?

(A)- When God wills it.

(B)-I still need time to think.

If you have an answer other than the answers suggested to you, add them in this blank:

In Setting (7), a request situation, the interactants are in an engagement relationship. The respondent in this role is not certain that his/her partner is eligible for marriage and believes s/he needs more time to weigh his/her options. He/she is confronted with the

partner's inquiry about a fixed wedding date. The question involves a high degree of imposition, and constitutes a face-threatening act. On the social distance dimension, the interactants are close (intimates). The question of power and dominance in engagement relationships generally depend on social norms and on the idiosyncratic nature of each relationship, but what may be rationally assumed in the situation at hand is that the decision maker, here the respondent, has more power.

2.3.8 Description of Setting (8)

Fig. 8

8 nta mudmin ʃla ttadxi:n. wæhd nha:r suwlæk wældæk w gal li:k: "Baba, ʔimta ʔadi təqtəʃ lgarru? ra:h maməzjænf." bæf ʔa tʒawəb?:

(!)- ʔa nhawəl nqətʔəʃu ʔa wældi
 (↔)- mʃa ʒənvəje djal l ʃæm ʒʒaj

ʔi:da ʃəndæk ʃi ʒawəb ʔaxur mən ʔi:r lʔaʒwiba l-muqtaraħa ʃli:k, dʔef ha fhæd lfaræy :

8. You are addicted to cigarette smoking. One day, your son says to you: “when are you planning to quit smoking? It is not good for your health”. What would you answer your son?:

(A)- I will try to give it up, son.
 (B)-By the beginning of next year, I will have given it up.

If you have an answer other than the ones suggested to you, add them in this blank:

Situation (8) involves a father-son exchange in an informal context. Given the role assigned to the participants in this situation, the exchange involves intimates who do not have equal status; the father is superior to the son. The son's question may be interpreted as an indirect reproach for two reasons: (a) that the son shows discontent with the father's

addiction to cigarettes smoking, and (b) that he believes that it is in the father's interest to quit smoking. Therefore, the son's question need not necessarily be interpreted as a reproach though, for it may be viewed as a piece of advice. The question "When will you give up smoking?" involves a number of presuppositions, including that "H should stop smoking at some point". However, if we consider the power relations between a father and a son in a culturally conservative society such as the Moroccan one, the superiority of the father as head of the family should not allow his progeny to question him, reproach him, or even advise him. The structure of the Moroccan family, particularly in the city, is, however, changing, and so are family relations, which have become more flexible and open. We believe, therefore, that the respondents will perceive the son's question more as a piece of advice than as a reproach.

The advice, coming from the son, also involves some degree of face-threat, not only because of the embarrassment it may cause the addressee (the father), but also due to the fact that it requires him to commit himself to a fixed date at which he will give up smoking.

2.3.9 Description of Setting (9)

Fig. 9

9. tsəlləfti wəhəd ləflu:s mən ʕənd wəhəd sʰəhbək u maʕəndək f bəʃ trəd li:h flu:su . ʒa ʕəndək sʰəhbək u wqəf ʕli:k ʔu galli:k: "ra:k tʕətʕəlti ʕlijja. ʔimta ya trəd lijja flu:ssi? ʃnu mumkin tʒawəb fmawqif fhəl hada?

(i)- qri:b, ʔin ʃəʔə lla:h
 (↵)-sməhlijja, walakin ma ʕəndi:ʃ b əʃ nrəd hum li:k

ʔi:da ʕəndək ʃi ʒawəb ʔaxur mən ʔi:r lʔaʒwiba lmuqtaraħa ʕli:k, dʕef ha fhəd lfarəy :

9. You borrowed a sum of money from a friend of yours and you cannot give him back his money yet. One day, he comes to you and says: " you took very long. When will you give me back my money?" In a situation such as this one, which of the two options given below would you choose to answer with?

- (A)-Soon, God willing.
- (B) Sorry, but I am penniless/broke.

If you have an answer other than the answers suggested to you, add them in this blank:

Setting (9) is a reproach situation. The two interlocutors are familiar to one another, and no power exertion is at play from either side. In this situation, the respondent receives explicit blame from his friend who had previously lent him a sum of money. According to this friend (the moneylender in this situation), the respondent took too long to return the loan. The respondent is obliged to respond to his interlocutor's demand for a fixed date at which the money will be returned. Two response options are provided: A commitment avoidance utterance, where the speaker does not commit himself to any specific time, and a commitment-making speech act, where he directly confesses his inability to refund the money.

2.3.10 Description of Setting (10)

Fig. 10

10. waʃædti wældæk annak ya tʃfri li:h PC mi:n jnʒəh. nʒəh hæd lwæld u nta/nti ma ʃændəkʃ lflu:s bæʃ tʃfri li:h hæd l- PC w galli:k : "Baba, ʒimta ya tʃfri lijja l- PC lli gəltil i?" ʃnu ya tʒawəb fhæd lhala?

- (١)- jə -ku:n xer, ʒin ʃæʔə lla:h.
- (٢)- ma- kajən flu:s daba ʔa wældi

ʔi:da ʃændək ʃi ʒawəb ʔaxur mən ʔi:r lʔaʒwiba lmuqtaraħa ʃli:k, dʕef hahæd lfaræy :

10. You promised your son to buy him a PC if he passed his exams. He passed his exams and you happened not to have money to buy him the promised computer. Your son came and asked you: "Dad, when are you going to buy me the computer you promised?" What would you answer in this situation?

(A)- You will have your PC, God willing.

(B)- We can't afford it.

If you have an answer other than the ones suggested to you, add them in this blank:

Setting (10) is a request for information situation. The initiator of the exchange is the son, who is reminding the father of a promise he had made. The son, who passed his exams, has fulfilled his part of the arrangement. He, therefore, requests the father to set a fixed time at which he will fulfill his side of the bargain. In utterance (A), the speaker links the fulfillment of the promise to God's will, thus avoiding any kind of commitment and responsibility. In utterance (B), by contrast, the speaker does not attempt to avoid commitment, but indirectly informs the son that the promise cannot be kept, for financial reasons.

The items used in the questionnaire have been entirely constructed by the researcher rather than adopted or adapted from other sources. Fieldwork time extended over a period of four months, and a total of 109 respondents have participated in filling out the dual-choice and DCT questionnaires. For the most part, administration of the questionnaires has been done by the researcher directly. Below, we address in more detail some methodological issues related to sampling and mode of administration.

2.4 Sampling Frame and Mode of Questionnaire Administration

Locating the sample has been highly dependent on respondent availability and initiative. The sampling frame used in the study is therefore convenience-based. Our aim has been to involve as many respondents as can be reached, for we detected a low response rate with the online questionnaire administration procedure on which we depended for an

important amount of our fieldwork time. A convenience sampling frame does not conflict with the two major goals set for the study, being, first, to measure the frequency of use of commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances in response to face-threatening acts among NS of MA, and, second, to identify the output strategies employed by these speakers for realizing the target utterances.

We, nonetheless, have endeavored to have a heterogeneous population sample, particularly in terms of the social variables of sex, age, and level of education, for one of the purposes of the study, though a subsidiary one, is to verify the existence or non-existence of a correlation between these variables and any trend detected in the responses given in the questionnaires.

Concerning the mode of administration, we have used different modes of data collection, including electronic mail, oral-aural, face-to-face questionnaire administration to illiterate individuals, direct provision of questionnaire papers to individual literate respondents, and also direct group administration when in conferences, university lecture rooms, and high school student classrooms. Our choice of the mode of administration depended highly on considerations of convenience, respondent availability constraints, and on turnaround time expectancies.

2.5 Description of the Respondents' Characteristics

The section below provides a classification of the respondents attributes by sex, level of education, and age group.

Table 1: Distribution of the Population by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	51	47%
Female	58	53%
Total	109	100%

Table 1 above provides a description of the population in terms of the gender variable. It shows that the population surveyed in this study is relatively evenly divided in terms of gender, with the male respondents accounting for 47% and the female respondents accounting for 53% of the total population.

Table 2: Distribution of the Population by Educational Level

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage
University	52	51%
High school	31	30%
Middle school	7	7%
Elementary school	5	5%
Illiterate	7	7%
Total	102*	100%

Table 2 provides a classification of the population according to the educational level. It indicates that 51% (the majority) of the participants are university postgraduates (doctoral students from different departments). This portion of the population has been the easiest to access and has recorded the highest response rate. Respondents with a high school level of education, account for 30% of the total population. The remaining 19 % consists of

* Seven respondents have not indicated their level of education.

participants with a low secondary level (7%), elementary level (5%), and illiterate (7%).

Table 3: Distribution of the Population by Age-Group

Age group	Frequency	Percentage
15 – 25	30	28%
26 – 35	36	33%
36 – 45	14	13%
46 – 55	11	10%
56 – 65	9	8%
Above 65	9	8%
Total	109	100%

Table 3 shows that 61% of the population is under 36: 33% of the respondents are aged between 26 and 35 while 28% of them are aged between 15 and 25. The fact that most of the respondents surveyed by this study are university and senior secondary school students explains these figures. Respondents aged 36-45, 46-55, 56-65, and above 65 account for 49% of the population, with the following percentages: 13%, 10%, 8%, and 8%, respectively.

2.6 Data Classification And Analysis

The data gathered in response to each item in the dual-choice questionnaire is classified in terms of the three social parameters of gender, level of education, and age. The data is also classified according to options (A) and (B) provided for the respondents as response choices. Our analysis goes beyond providing statistical descriptions of the data to explaining and interpreting these figures, and the trends they represent.

Data classification and analysis of the DCT is carried out differently, for the use of each instrument is motivated by different research objectives. After a preliminary reading of the data gathered in response to the speech situations given on the DCT, only the target utterances; viz., commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances, are considered. These utterances are then organized into different genera, depending on their realization strategies. A descriptive name or label is then assigned to each strategy. Our classification of the DCT data is in this sense done according to the output strategies used for making commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances. In the analysis of the data yielded through the DCT, and based on the responses given in that instrument, we provide examples illustrating each strategy. We also provide a statistical figure representing the frequency of use, and percent value relative to, each strategy, together with a qualitative comment following each strategy type.

2.7 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to outline the general methodological framework used by the study from start to finish. It describes in detail the variables contained in each research question, and addresses issues relating to measurement instruments, rationale behind using them, sampling frame, population sample, and also data classification and analysis procedures.

The next chapter is concerned with data processing and analysis. It provides a classification and analysis of the data collected through both the dual-choice and DCT questionnaires.

Chapter 3: Data Processing and Analysis

3. Data Processing and Analysis

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the classification and analysis of the data collected through the dual-choice and discourse completion questionnaires. The rich dataset produced for each item in the dual-choice questionnaire is recorded and organized in the form of tables. These contain the frequency counts and percent values representing the respondents' reactions to each situation. Rather than using a single-variable classification of the data, we have chosen, for the purposes of this study, to classify the data by the gender, level of education, and age variables. Consequently, our data analysis is a multivariate one, for we do not only analyze the data arising from each variable distinctly, but we also examine the differences in the response patterns given by the different groups surveyed in the thesis. This level of analysis enables us to determine which of the three independent variables taken account of by the study has the most impact on the respondents' chosen responses.

Unlike the dual-choice questionnaire, the DCT is a qualitative data collection instrument that acts as a stimulus-driven production task, and will, as such, have more of a qualitative analysis. The different strategies emerging from the data elicited through the DCT are commented on, and illustrated, using respondent-formulated utterances.

3.1 Classification and Analysis of the Dual-Choice Questionnaire Data

Table 4: Responses to Situation (1) Classified by Gender

Situation (1)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Gender	Male	A	26	51%
B			25	49%	
Total			51	100%	
Female		A	43	74%	
		B	15	26%	
		Total	58	100%	
Total			109	100%	

3.1.1 Description of Table 4

Table 4 above provides a classification of the data given in response to Situation (1) in the questionnaire, according to the gender variable. Male respondents account for 47% of the total population, while female respondents make up 53%. The responses are classified by gender as well as by the response option chosen. The response option coded 'A' in the table above refers to the target utterance (in this case a responsibility-avoiding utterance) while 'B' counts as a responsibility-admitting utterance. The results for each population group (i.e. male and female) are presented separately to allow for a clearer and easier reading of the numerical descriptions. The reader is reminded that Situation (1) involves a manager/employee role-set. The respondent (employee) in this situation arrives late at work, and is required to respond to his employer's indirect reproach. In response option A (i.e. "mja ʒlijja tran", or "the train left me behind"), the speaker shifts blame to an agent other than himself. By contrast, response B (i.e. "ma faqtf bækri", or "I overselpt") involves a direct admission of responsibility (See Chapter Three for a detailed description of Setting (1), and of response options (A) and (B)).

3.1.2 Analysis of the Data in Table (4)

A correlation between the respondents' reactions to Situation One and the gender variable is clearly manifest. Examining the responses given by the male sample, responsibility-avoiding utterance (A) and responsibility-admitting response (B) are chosen with more or less equal percentages: 51% of male respondents have opted for target response (A) while 49% have opted for (B), making a straightforward admission of responsibility. Considering the female population, we observe that the rates concerning each response option are far apart: 74% of the female respondents have opted for the responsibility-avoiding option.

Our initial expectation was that respondents from both groups would opt for the target utterance, considering that (a) responsibility-avoidance speech behavior is characteristic of both genders, and (b) that Situation (1) involves the face-threatening act of

blaming/reproaching, which, coming from a superior, is likely to prompt the respondent to opt for the defensive and face-saving strategy provided in option (A). Our initial expectations concerning responses to Item 1 are also based on the fact that the utterance given in (B), reading “I overslept”, is not only a bold and bare admission of responsibility made without any redressive action to H’s face, but it also involves clear indifference to, and disregard for, H’s symbolic power. Moreover, the fact that the prompting reproach in Item (1) is made using an indirect polite strategy (i.e. the reproach is conveyed in the form of a request for information about the employee’s reasons for being late) should trigger a polite response by the respondent; one that is likely to avoid confrontation and conflict.

There is more than one candidate explanation for the results presented above. It seems that the perlocutionary effect of the employer’s reproach is stronger on the female respondents than it is on male informants because *women tend to be more status-conscious than men*. This is a finding that has been noted by eminent sociolinguists Peter Trudgill (1974: 94), and William Labov (1972: 182). The empirically confirmed finding that *women are more polite than men* (cf. Brown and Levinson, 1987: 30, 252; Lakoff (1975: 57)) combined with the fact that maintaining class hierarchies is associated with good manners and politeness also account for the results presented in table (4).

Employer/employee gender relationships seem to have a bearing on the politeness level used. In the Moroccan context, it is an observable fact that females address their superiors using the Moroccan Arabic honorific “Si” (Mr.) placed before the person’s first or last name, as in “Si Hasan” (Mr. Hassan), while male speakers generally take the liberty to call their superiors by first name without using any honorifics, by simply saying “Hasan”.

The view that women are more status-conscious than men is corroborated by many linguists. In his discussion of language and gender identity, Holmes (1992: 171-2) contends that among the differences between the speech of men and women is the fact that women use more standard-forms in their speech because they are more status-conscious. Lakoff (1975:

57), on the other hand, argues that “politeness involves an absence of strong statements” and that “women’s speech is devised to prevent the expression of strong statements”. The statement in B (i.e. “I overslept”) would be considered the stronger, and more direct statement. It seems that, to some informants, responding to an employer's reproach with a statement like "I overslept" is considered rude given the role relationships between S and H, the speaker’s expectations, and the fact that the speaker has been indirect, and therefore polite, in his reproach.

We may also attribute the results shown in table 4; namely that more male respondents than female ones have opted for the stronger statement in (B) than the weaker/mitigated one in (A), to the fact that men feel the need to assert themselves vis-à-vis other men while women tend to have other concerns (See Maaltz and Borker, 1982: 207; cited in Tannen, 1993 :87). It should be noted, however, that the general tendency both among the male and female respondents is to avoid responsibility. Below are a classification and analysis of the respondents’ answers to situation (1), classified by the level of education variable.

Table 5: Responses to Situation (1) Classified by Level of Education

Situation (1)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Educational level	University level		A	25
			B	27	52%
			Total	52	100%
High school level			A	21	68%
			B	10	32%
			Total	31	100%
Junior High school level			A	5	71%
			B	2	29%
			Total	7	100%
Primary school level			A	4	80%
			B	1	20%
			Total	5	100%
Illiterate			A	7	100%
			B	0	0%
			Total	7	100%
Total				102	100%

3.1.3 Description of Table (5)

Table (5) contains numerical values representing the respondents' answers to the first item in the questionnaire, based on a classification of the respondents by level of education. Five levels are distinguished: 'university', 'upper secondary', 'lower secondary' and 'elementary' levels of education, and 'illiterate'. The respondents' reactions are also classified according to the response option chosen.

3.1.4 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table (5)

The data presented in table (5) seem to indicate that there is a strong systematic correlation between the level of education variable and the degree or rate of responsibility-accepting/admitting-responses: i.e. the higher the level of education the lower the rate of responsibility-avoiding responses and, correspondingly, the lower the level of education, the higher the rate of responsibility-avoiding responses. Illiterate respondents, for instance, unanimously chose to avoid responsibility for their being late, by opting for response (A). Also, 80% of respondents with a low level of education (i.e. elementary school level) exhibit the same tendency. By contrast, only 48% of respondents with a university level of education have opted for the responsibility avoidance choice, whereas the rates of responsibility avoidance among high school and lower secondary school levels are 68% and 71%, respectively.

These facts seem to suggest that the more educated category of respondents has a different assessment of responsibility avoidance speech behavior from that of the female population. It would make sense to posit that, unlike female respondents, educated respondents seem to perceive the responsibility-avoidance option given in (A) not as the more 'polite' and face-saving option, but rather as the more deceiving option. Of note is that the responses given by the more educated informants in our sample are aligned with Grice's (1989: 27) Quality Maxim "try to make your contribution one that is true." It is simply more

rational to tell the truth to the hearer than to lie to him/her. Below is a classification of the respondents' reactions to Item (1) of the questionnaire, according to the age variable.

Table 6: Responses to Situation (1) Classified by Age

Situation (1)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Classification of the responses by age group	15 – 25	A	16	55%
B			14	45%	
Total			30	100%	
26 – 35		A	23	64%	
		B	13	36%	
		Total	36	100%	
36 – 45		A	8	57%	
		B	6	43%	
		Total	14	100%	
46 – 55		A	7	64%	
		B	4	36%	
		Total	11	100%	
56 – 65		A	7	78%	
		B	2	22%	
		Total	9	100%	
Above 65		A	8	89%	
		B	1	11%	
		Total	9	100%	
Total			109	100%	

3.1.5 Description of Table 6

The table above provides a classification of the informants' responses to Situation (1). The data presented in this table are classified according to the age variable. The purpose is to determine whether or not the age variable has any bearing on the informants' choices.

3.1.6 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 6

The responses summarized in Table (6) indicate, and confirm, that the general tendency among speakers of MA is to avoid responsibility. The table also indicates that the age variable we have adopted as a classificatory criterion has incidence on the respondents' choices such that respondents aged above 65 have opted for responsibility-avoiding response A with the rate of 89%, the highest figure for all groups of the sample. By contrast,

respondents aged [15-25] have indicated their choice of the same response with the rate of 55%, which is the lowest rate representing option A for all age-groups.

Also of note, the disparity between the rates of A and B choices for most of the age groups taken into account by the study is relatively low.

Table 7: Responses to Situation (2) Classified by Gender

Situation (2)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Gender	Male		A	36
			B	15	29%
			Total	51	100%
Female			A	41	71%
			B	17	29%
			Total	58	100%
Total				109	1000%

3.1.7 Description of Table 7

Table 7 above provides a classification by gender of the respondents’ answers to the second item in the questionnaire. The results show that the rates of A choices are identical for both categories of respondents (i.e. 71%). The question posed in Situation 2, “Why did you lose the football game?” is one of the commonest questions asked by reporters after a football game is over. The reporter's question is face-threatening for the coach (addressee/respondent), given that the game took place in the losing team’s hometown. The respondent is required to choose from the two response options provided, either A (i.e. We were unlucky), a responsibility-avoiding utterance, or B (i.e. We were not up to the level), a responsibility-admitting utterance.

3.1.8 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 7

The fact that male and female respondents have opted for choice A with a rate of 71%

made the same linguistic choice with a percentage of 71% is compatible with our assumption that Moroccan Arabic language speakers tend to avoid responsibility for what is regarded as blameworthy actions. It is in fact common for Moroccan coaches and players alike to attribute their failure or loss to external factors, in this case to the factor of 'luck', or 'hazard'. Of course, when the team wins, external factors are ignored, and success is attributed to internal factors, the players' skills, or the coach's professionalism and wisdom. This is evidently a self-serving bias. This phenomenon is accounted for within social and educational psychology in terms of Attribution Theory.

Heider (1958), the father of Attribution Theory, believes that individuals often attempt to arrive at causal explanations of events, either by making external attributions (lying outside the person) or internal ones (related to the person's internal characteristics). This idea was later on developed by Weiner (1979), who states that the intrapersonal self-directed thoughts on causal attributions for success or failure are rarely objective ones. He maintains that reactions to success and failure are in fact affective. Weiner adds that people interpret their environment in such a way as to maintain a positive image of the self to themselves and to the others. Perceptions of causal explanations to achievement and failure applies to many contexts, including academic performance, career status, interpersonal relations, and athletic contests. In situation 2, where an athletic contest is involved, the respondents chose to shift responsibility for their failure away from their own incompetence as trainers to 'accidental chance' and 'bad luck'. Using 'luck' as a causal explanation is in fact the most effective way to avoid responsibility for blamable actions because it is at once an external, unstable, and, most importantly, an uncontrollable factor. At times, the losing team and/or its coach resort to shifting blame to factors other than 'luck', when they feel they have overused the 'bad luck' pretext after repeated failures. Their second less efficient, but still effective way of avoiding responsibility is to put the blame on 'task difficulty'. Blaming failure on the overwhelming strength of the adversary still involves the use of an uncontrollable and external (but stable)

factor. Reactions to Situation 2 do not correlate with the gender variable since both samples opted for A with similar percentages.

This suggests that response A, which corresponds to a responsibility-avoiding utterance, is viewed by both groups as the safer, and more face-saving option. Of special interest it is to note that a comparison of the male informants' responses to Situations 1 and 2, and the fact that they are not consistent (i.e. 49% of male respondents chose option B in response to Situation 1 while only 29% indicated the same choice in response to Situation 2) indicates that the respondents' assessments of the role-sets presented in Situations 1 and 2 and also of the degree of face-threat involved in these situations differs, and correlates strongly with the respondents' reactions. The degree of threat involved in a reproach made by an employer (cf. Situation 1) is assessed as being higher than that involved in a reproach made by a reporter (cf. Situation 2).

Below is a classification and analysis of the respondents' answers to situation two according to the level of education variable.

Table 8: Responses to Situation (2) Classified by Level of Education

Situation (2)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Educational Level	University level	A	31	60%
B			21	40%	
Total			52	100%	
High school level		A	21	68%	
		B	10	32%	
		Total	31	100%	
Junior High school level		A	6	86%	
		B	1	24%	
		Total	7	100%	
Primary school level		A	5	100%	
		B	0	0%	
		Total	5	100%	
Illiterate		A	7	100%	
		B	0	0%	
		Total	7	100%	
Total				102	100 %

3.1.9 Description of Table 8

Table 8 provides numerical values representing the participants' reactions to the second item in the questionnaire, based on a classification of the respondents by level of education.

3.1.10 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 8

Table 8 displays a consistent pattern of responses, where the percentages of the participants who avoid responsibility increase as we go lower on the educational level scale. The lower the level of education, the higher the rate of responsibility avoidance. Thus, we note that 60% of respondents with a university level of education, followed by 68% of respondents with a high school level of education and 86% of respondents with a lower secondary school educational level have opted for the responsibility non-admitting A-response in reaction to the second item in the questionnaire, while 100% of respondents with an elementary attainment level together with illiterate respondents have opted for the responsibility-avoidance option B. These findings corroborate those findings yielded in response to Situation (1) in the questionnaire thereby confirming the correlation between the level of education variable and the participants' responses, and, consequently, seem to lend evidence to the assumption that MA language speakers tend to avoid responsibility for negative acts. The respondents who have opted for a responsibility-avoiding utterance have clearly assessed option B as being the more face-saving option. Distancing oneself from a blameworthy act and shifting the blame to 'luck' supports the positive face wants of the speaker-i.e. the desire to be approved.

Table 9: Responses to Situation (2) Classified by Age

Situation (2)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Classification of responses by age group	15 – 25	A	29	67%
B			10	33%	
Total			30	100%	
26 – 35		A	24	67%	
		B	12	33%	
		Total	36	100%	
36 – 45		A	10	71%	
		B	4	29%	
		Total	14	100%	
46 – 55		A	8	73%	
		B	3	27%	
		Total	11	100%	
56 – 65		A	7	78%	
		B	2	22%	
		Total	9	100%	
Above 65		A	8	89%	
		B	1	11%	
		Total	9	100%	
Total				109	100%

3.1.11 Description of table 9

The aim of Table 9 above is to find out whether or not there is a correlation the variable of age and the informants' responses to Situation (2) (i.e. reporter/coach role-set).

3.1.12 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 9

Based on the table above, we notice that the number of respondents who have chosen the responsibility-avoiding response in the first five age groups is high, with the respective rates of 67%, 67%, 71%, 73%, and 78%. The respondents aged above 65 have opted for the responsibility-avoiding choice with the highest rate; 89%, which is strikingly inconsistent with their responses to Situation (1). We attribute this incongruence, as we did for the responses indicated by the male respondents, to the difference in the degree of threat involved in Situation (1) and (2); the former involving greater threat than the latter. While a total of 44% of respondents aged above 65 have opted for responsibility-assuming response B, only

11% of these respondents have indicated the same choice in reaction to Situation (2). This suggests that *where the level of threat to H's positive face is high, the tendency to avoid responsibility is relatively less significant.*

The next item in the questionnaire is not a blame situation, but rather a request situation, which engages the respondents in the hypothetical role of neighbor to the request-maker. In this situation, the respondent is requested to lend his car to his neighbor for a trip. The degree of imposition of the requestive-act in Situation 3 is high. Options (A) and (B) correspond to a commitment-avoiding response, and a commitment-making act, respectively. For a detailed description of Situation 3, the reader is referred to Chapter 3.

Table 10: Responses to Situation (3) Classified by Gender

Situation (3)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Gender	Male		A	22
			B	29	57%
			Total	51	100%
Female			A	30	52%
			B	28	48%
			Total	58	100%
Total				109	100%

3.1.13 Description of Table 10

The table above provides a classification by gender of the participants' responses to Situation (3) in the questionnaire. The respondents' answers are in turn classified into two response categories; A, representing the target utterance; a non-commisive response, and B, representing a commisive utterance. Setting (3) involves a request to borrow the addressee's/respondent's car. The request is made by the respondent's hypothetical neighbor.

109 respondents, 51 males and 58 females, have responded to this item. The figures shown above indicate that 57% of male respondents against 48% of females have chosen to directly reject the request rather than avoid committing themselves to a specific answer.

3.1.14 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 8

The responses given to Situation (3) appear to lend evidence to our observation that the responses given to the situational prompts correlate with the degree of threat involved in the prompt's main speech-act, be it a reproach or a request. We had observed in preceding analyses that where the level of threat to H's positive face is high, the tendency to avoid responsibility is relatively weak. In a similar respect, the results presented in Table 8 indicate that where the degree of imposition on negative face is high, the tendency to avoid commitment is weak.

The majority of male respondents, with the rate of 52%, have chosen to reject the request. Female respondents, on the other hand, consistently with their responses to preceding situations, continue to opt for the more polite option (response A). Yet, we need to note that the rate with which female respondents have chosen option B is higher (48%) for this situation compared to the rates indicated for preceding situations. This seems to indicate that the desire not to be impeded in one's actions, to be free from imposition, and to protect or keep one's property is more important to the respondents than their need to protect their own and their interlocutor's face.

Our predictions for the informants' responses to Situation 3 were different from the choices they have indicated. The respondents who have opted for B, males and females combined, have done so despite their knowing that response A does not place them under any obligation to lend the car. In utterance A, the respondent is given the opportunity to circumvent the request by implying that he or she will consider the request at a later time. Through utterance A, the respondent is not only allowed to protect his own and his interlocutor's face, but he or she is also allowed to signal to the interlocutor that the request

needs considering, processing, and thinking, and that it is not the kind of directive that can be readily and immediately complied with. Normally, this realization on the part of the requester would give him or her to understand that the request is more likely to be declined eventually, and would thus discourage them to ask the car-owner for a definitive answer later on. Opting for response A would have been face-saving to both interactants at the time of conversation and may even spare the car-owner a second confrontation with the requester. In general, a commitment avoidance utterance ensures that neither interlocutor loses face. Response B, which reads () “sməhlija, makansəlləf tomobilti” (“No, sorry, but people do not lend their cars” or “cars are not for lending”), not only begins with a direct refusal of the request, but also communicates to the hearer that he has made a mistake by ignoring the common norm that “people do not lend their cars.” Moreover, in the Moroccan value system and mindset, being, or acting as, a good neighbor is a highly-valued personal quality. Therefore, if the request cannot be granted to the neighbor, then at least a commitment avoidance utterance would be the closest alternative to polite behavior, compared to a direct rejection of the request. Our initial assumptions concerning responses to Situation 3 were also due to the fact that the requestive-act (i.e. “wəf mumkin tsəlləfli tomobiltək” or “could you please lend me your car?”) in the situation at hand is performed using a negative politeness strategy. The degree of imposition resulting from that strategy is accordingly a low one. This redressive/mitigating strategy increases the degree of optionality conveyed in the request, thus allowing a way out of the imposition and face-threat inherent to requests. It is, in fact, polite to appear to give H two options, one of which is the possibility to say no. Usually, the degree of politeness will correspond to the degree of imposition involved in the requestive-act. Politeness and

indirectness are, in this sense, parallel dimensions ⁹ (Brown and Levinson (1987: 20-21); Searle (1975a: 171)). Accordingly, we assumed that politeness will be reciprocated by politeness.

Of relevance it is to note that the rate of female respondents who have opted for the commitment avoidance option (52%) is clearly higher than the rate of those who have chosen response B (48%). It can be said, therefore, that though the choices indicated by the respondents for this item deviate to some extent from the tendency we observed earlier, the responses yielded by the female sample come to confirm the women's tendency to avoid commitment and to give heed to considerations of politeness more than men do.

Table 11: Responses to Situation (3) Classified by Level of Education

Situation (3)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Educational level	University level	A	23	44%
B			29	56%	
Total			52	100%	
High school level		A	11	35%	
		B	20	65%	
		Total	31	100%	
Junior High school level		A	4	57%	
		B	3	43%	
		Total	7	100%	
Primary school level		A	3	60%	
		B	2	40%	
		Total	5	100%	
Illiterate		A	4	57%	
		B	3	43%	
		Total	7	100%	
Total				102	100%

3.1.15 Description of Table 11

The total number of valid responses to Situation 3 of the questionnaire is 102 only due

9. While it is generally agreed that politeness is "the chief motivation for indirectness" (cf. Searle, 1975a: 171), several studies have shown that more directness is not always regarded as less politeness. Wierzbicka ([1991] 2003: 36), for example, points out that in Polish, the "flat imperative" is considered to be one of the milder options in performing directives. The interpretation of indirectness as politeness or impoliteness is rather culture-specific.

to the fact that 7 participants did not indicate their educational attainment level. The aim is to examine whether there is any correlation between the level of education variable and the respondents' answers.

3.1.16 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 11

The pattern of responses displayed in Table 11 is similar to that observed in Table 9 in that the disparity between the rates representing choices A and B is not significant. Respondents from all five level of education categories, including university, high school, secondary, elementary, and illiterate respondents, have chosen options A and B with the respective rates of 44%/ 56%, 39%/61%, 57%/ 43%, 60% 40%, 57%/ 43%.

Based on the figures presented hitherto, we may assert that while the general tendency to avoid commitment in request situations, and to avoid responsibility in blame situations is clearly manifest the majority of respondents, the frequency/rate with which option A is chosen is less significant in situations involving a high degree of imposition/threat, such as Situation 3. We may also assert that on occasions where the threat/imposition is assessed as being moderate, the tendency to avoid responsibility/commitment is maintained, and a clear correlation between the gender, level of education, and age variables is observed as female, illiterate, and older respondents seem to be more avoiding of commitment/responsibility than the remaining groups. The statistical figures and analyses of the following situations will either confirm or disconfirm the observations noted above.

Table 12: Responses to Situation (3) Classified by Age

Situation (3)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Classification of responses by age group	15 – 25	A	13	43%
B			17	57%	
Total			30	100%	
26 – 35		A	16	44%	
		B	20	56%	
		Total	36	100%	
36 – 45		A	7	50%	
		B	7	50%	
		Total	14	100%	
46 – 55		A	5	45%	
		B	6	55%	
		Total	11	100%	
56 – 65		A	5	56%	
		B	4	44%	
		Total	9	100%	
Above 65		A	0	0%	
		B	9	100%	
		Total	9	100%	
Total			109	100%	

3.1.17 Description of Table 12

The table above shows the frequency count and percentages representing the participants' answers to the third item of the questionnaire. The data are classified according to the age variable. The participants are required to choose either A or B, depending on whether they would opt for a commitment avoidance utterance in response to their interlocutor's request or for a direct committal.

3.1.18 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 12

The figures presented above show that the tendency to avoid commitment is reversed for all age-group categories, excepting the age-group category [56-65], who have chosen response A with the rate of 56% . Respondents aged [15-25], [26-35], [36-45], and [46-55] have opted for commitment-avoidance response B with the respective rates of 43%, 44%,

50%, and 45%. The most striking results in Table 12 are those indicated by respondents aged beyond 65, who have chosen option B with unanimity. These results come as striking because the majority of respondents belonging to this age group has been consistently opting for choice A in response to all preceding situations. In response to Situation 1 and 2, response options A have been selected by respondents aged above 65 with the rates of 89%. These results confirm that the respondent's choice of a commissive or a non-commissive in request situations, or of a responsibility-avoiding or assuming response in blame situations is determined to a significant degree by the level of threat involved in each situational prompt.

These initial findings seem to point to an interesting avenue for future research on the topic of commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies. Investigating the correlation between the respondents' choices of a commissive or non-commissive, or of a responsibility-admitting or assuming response, on the one hand, and the level of face-threat involved in the stimulus prompts presented to them would especially be interesting. An important prerequisite for such an investigation would be to examine the respondents' assessment of different request and blame situations in terms of levels/rankings of imposition, and degrees of face-threat through a rating task, with a view to confirming or otherwise disconfirming our observation that high degrees of face-threat, do correlate with, and is a strong determinant of, the choices indicated by the respondents.

Table 13: Responses to Situation (4) Classified by Gender

Situation (4)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Gender	Male		A	39
			B	12	24%
			Total	51	100%
Female			A	47	81%
			B	11	19%
			Total	58	100%
Total				109	100%

3.1.19 Description of Table 13

In Request Situation 4, the respondent is engaged in a conversation with a stranger, who makes a request for information about the respondent's neighbor. The prompt question in Situation 4 is "

(179) "ʔi:n fæʔ ɪla:h, ana nawi nətzuwəʒ ʒarət kum. ʒæfæk bæf tənəs'əħni?"

" If God wills, I intend to marry your neighbor. Please, what do you advise me?"

The respondent knows his/her neighbor is not eligible for marriage. He is required to select one of two options, commitment avoidance response A, where the respondent says that "ʔalla:hu ʔaɕlam" (i.e. meaning God knows best), thereby not committing himself to any clear statement about the neighbor. Referring to God's greater knowledge in response to requests for information is a strategy that Moroccan people use very often to avoid on-record statements. In response option B, the speaker asserts the ineligibility of the neighbor for marriage. For a detailed characterization of Situation 4, see Chapter Three. The figures in Table 13 indicate that 76% of male respondents against 81% of female respondents have chosen option A.

3.1.20 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 13

Two observations we had established earlier are validated by the results shown in Table 13 above: first, that speakers of Moroccan Arabic, in general, tend to avoid commitment/responsibility in response to face threatening acts, and; second, that female respondents, in particular, tend to avoid commitment/responsibility more than their male counterparts do. Thus, we notice that the majority of our respondents, males and females combined, have opted for the commitment avoidance utterance "A" in reaction to item 4, with a rate of 81% of female respondents against 76% of male respondents.

Our observation that both male and female respondents tend to avoid commitment/responsibility has been infallibly confirmed for the majority of the items analyzed so far, with a higher amenability on the part of the female population to do so. The rates with which female respondents have chosen option A in Situations 1, 2, and 3 are 74%, 71%, and 52%, against 51%, 71%, and 43% of male respondents, respectively. On the other hand, when we examined the data classified according to the level of education and age variables, we observed a general pattern of responses where the older and less educated respondents were the most avoiding of commitment/responsibility. In this respect, illiterate respondents has been the only group to opt for the target utterance unanimously in response to Situations 1 and 2 for example. Similarly, and in response to the same situations, the oldest sample (i.e. above 65) in our population has chosen response option A with the rates of 89%. This tendency to avoid commitment/responsibility was disrupted only in Situation 3. We attributed this instance of deviance to the fact that the request made in the third item of the questionnaire involves a high degree of imposition by S on H.

Item 4 also involves a request, but of a different kind. While there is a certain degree of imposition involved in this request, it is not as important as that which is involved in Situation 3. Therefore we expect that, all things being equal, the tendency towards commitment avoidance will be maintained irrespective of the variable adopted.

Table 14: Responses to Situation (4) Classified by Level of Education

Situation (4)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Educational level	University level	A	37	71%
B			15	29%	
Total			52	100%	
High school level		A	24	77%	
		B	7	23%	
		Total	31	100%	
Junior High school level		A	6	86%	
		B	1	14%	
		Total	7	100%	
Primary school level		A	5	100%	
		B	0	0%	
		Total	5	100%	
Illiterate		A	7	100%	
		B	0	0%	
		Total	7	100%	
Total				102	100%

3.1.21 Description of Table 14

Table 14 presents a classification of the respondents' responses to the request situation in Item 4 based on the level of education variable. The aim is to examine whether there is any affinity or relation between the level of education variable and any detected regularity in the respondents' answers. The table shows that option A has been chosen by all five level of education categories from highest to lowest with the respective rates of 71%, 77%, 86%, 100%, and 100%.

3.1.22 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 14

As expected, most respondents of all educational levels avoided going on record. It should be noted that the percentages of the participants who opted for utterance A increase as we move from higher levels of education to lower ones. This same response pattern has been observed in the respondents' reactions to Items 1 and 2 of the questionnaire, where older respondents have proven to be the most avoiding of commitment.

Though answers to situation 4 are relatively similar to those given in reply to situation 1 and 2, we need to emphasize that there is something peculiar about Situation 4. The respondents' choice of the target utterance in response to item 4 in fact reflects an important culturally-shared value among Moroccans, which is not to stand in the way of a girl's marriage or "saqd" (i.e. happiness), as Moroccans call it. Spoiling someone's (particularly a girl's) opportunity to get married is indeed considered both socially and religiously as abhorrent behavior. This, in our view, has played an important role in most respondents' choice of the target utterance. Therefore, we assume this hypothesis to be confirmed by our classification of the respondents' responses according to age.

Table 15: Responses to Situation (4) Classified by Age

Situation (4)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Classification of responses by age group	15 - 25		A	21
			B	9	30%
			Total	30	100%
26 – 35			A	26	72%
			B	9	25%
			Total	36	100%
36 - 45			A	13	93%
			B	1	7%
			Total	14	100%
46 - 55			A	8	73%
			B	3	27%
			Total	11	100%
56 - 65			A	8	78%
			B	1	22%
			Total	9	100%
Above 65			A	9	100%
			B	0	0%
			Total	9	100%
Total				109	100%

3.1.23 Description of Table 15

The figures shown in Table 15 above indicate that respondents from all the age-groups surveyed by the study have opted for commitment-avoiding response A. The oldest

sample in our population; that is, respondents aged above 65, has opted for response A with the highest rate (i.e. 100%).

3.1.24 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 15

The results shown in table 15 further confirm the existence of a correlation between the age variable and the respondents’ responses. As we move downward from one age group to another, the rates of respondents who have opted for “A” markedly increase. The number of respondents who chose to avoid commitment in all age categories is very high. The respective percentages yielded by all six age categories from the youngest to the oldest samples are 70%, 72%, 93%, 73%, 78% and 100%. The fact that the category of respondents most advanced in age (i.e. above 65) has opted for the target utterance with the highest percentage indicates that religious and cultural values are generally held more strongly by older people than younger ones.

Table 16: Responses to Situation (5) Classified by Gender

Situation (5)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Gender	Male		A	21
			B	30	59%
			Total	51	100%
Female			A	12	21%
			B	46	79%
			Total	58	100%
Total				109	100%

3.1.25 Description of Table 16

In Situation 5, the respondent is engaged in a father/son role set. The addressee/respondent, who is assigned the role of son/daughter, is confronted with a face-

threatening request for information by the father. In item 5, the respondent has just learnt that he failed his exams, and is asked by his/her father about the results. The eliciting utterance used in situational prompt 5 reads as follows:

(44) "nnata?i:ʒ huma haduk wla fħal djal lƣæm lli fæt?"

"Were the results good or are they the same as last year's"

As noted earlier in Chapter Three, the prompting speech-act counts as highly face-threatening for H's positive face, for it is not only a request for information, but also involves a reproach (cf. Chapter Three). In a situation such as this one, one may either avoid responsibility for one's failure, using one of the many available responsibility avoidance strategies, or simply admit failure without any attempt to avoid responsibility. Accordingly, the respondent was offered two possible response options, utterance A, a responsibility avoidance response, and utterance B, a responsibility-assuming utterance. In utterance A, the respondent places the blame for failure on his teachers. In utterance B, on the other hand, the son directly tells the news of his failure. In what follows, we present the respondents' answers to item 5 and attempt to determine whether there is any correlation between the respondents' choices and the relevant gender, education, and age variables.

Table 16 offers a classification of the respondents' answers according to the gender variable. The majority of respondents have chosen response B rather than A. The table indicates that the rates of male and female respondents who have opted for response A amounts to 41% and 21% respectively.

3.1.26 Analysis of the Data in Table 16

Contrary to our expectations, the respondents have not chosen a responsibility avoidance utterance in reaction to Situation 5. The female respondents were less avoiding of commitment than their male counterparts. 59 % of male respondents against 79% of female respondents have opted for a committal. Two competing explanations may be given in justification for these results:

(a) The respondents may have found the suggested response in A as not sufficiently protective of their face. The respondents may have assessed that response A might arouse H's suspicions, for utterance A (i.e. "The teachers hate me") places the blame for failure not on luck, fate, but on an indistinguishable group of teachers. The generalization involved in response A in fact weakens the protective power of the responsibility-avoiding utterance since it may not sound plausible to H that all the teachers have conspired against a singled out student.

(b) The respondents may have found utterance A sufficiently protective, but overly unethical because the blame is placed on people rather than on exam difficulty, luck, fate, exam difficulty, or sickness. The results would have been very different had we provided the respondents with an utterance such as "I wasn't feeling well on the days of the exams" or "I got unlucky this year".

It seems that, despite the fact that responsibility avoidance utterances typically serve the interests of the speaker in protecting his/her positive face, they cease to be attractive as an option if they are deemed potentially damaging to one's face as explained in (a), or damaging to other individuals as explained in (b).

Table 17: Responses to Situation (5) Classified by Level of Education

Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage	
Situation (5)	Educational level	University level	A	12	23%
			B	40	77%
			Total	52	100%
		High school level	A	9	29%
			B	22	71%
			Total	31	100%
		Junior High school level	A	2	29%
			B	5	71%
			Total	7	100%
	Primary school level	A	1	20%	
		B	4	80%	
		Total	5	100%	
	Illiterate	A	2	23%	
		B	5	77%	
		Total	7	100%	
Total			102	100%	

3.1.27 Description of Table 17

Table 17 presents a classification by the level of education variable of the respondents' reactions to the fifth item of the questionnaire. The aim is to find out whether the observed tendency of speakers of Moroccan Arabic to avoid responsibility is affected by their educational attainment.

3.1.28 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 17

Considering Table 17 shows that the majority of the respondents within each of the five levels of education favour utterance B to the responsibility avoidance utterance given in option A. Moving from the highest level to the lowest on the educational level scale, the percentages of the respondents who did not attempt to avoid responsibility come in the following order: 77%, 71%, 71%, 80%, and 77%, respectively. We believe that the participants have preference for responsibility-admitting response B for the same reasons mentioned in the previous section: either because the responsibility-avoiding option provided in Situation 5 is not protective enough of the speaker's face or because it is deemed unethical.

Table 18: Responses to Situation (5) Classified by Age-group

Options	Response options		Frequency	Percentage
	Classification of responses by age group	15 - 25	A	13
B			17	57%
Total			30	100%
26 - 35		A	11	31%
		B	25	69%
		Total	36	100%
36 - 45		A	2	14%
		B	12	86%
		Total	14	100%
46 - 55		A	0	0%
		B	11	100%
		Total	11	100%
56 - 65		A	4	44%
		B	5	56%
		Total	9	100%
Above 65		A	3	33%
		B	6	67%
		Total	9	100%
Total			109	100%

3.1.29 Description of Table 18

Table 18 offers a classification of the respondents' answers according to the age variable. The aim is to verify whether or not the respondents' answers are influenced by their age profiles.

3.1.30 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 18

Like preceding results, participants from all six age-categories prefer responsibility-admitting response B to the responsibility avoidance utterance in A. However, the classification of the responses according to the age variable reveals a distinct route or direction taken by middle-aged respondents. A substantial proportion of the population aged [36-45] and [46-55] have opted for utterance B, with a respective 86% and 100% of these respondents admitting responsibility instead of avoiding it by opting for choice A. Going from the youngest age categories to the oldest ones, the percentages of respondents having opted for utterance B are as follows: 57%, 69%, 86%, 100%, 56%, and 67%.

Table 19: Responses to Situation (6) Classified by Gender

Situation (6)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Gender	Male		A	23
			B	28	55%
			Total	51	100%
Female			A	29	50%
			B	29	50%
			Total	58	100%
Total				109	100%

3.1.31 Description of Table 19

Table 19 presents the participants' reactions to the sixth item of the questionnaire. Item (6), which is a blame situation mainly, involves the respondents in the role-set of

student/teacher. In this situation, the respondent, assuming the role of student, comes late for an exam, and is required to justify his being late.

Table 19 shows numerical data consisting of the frequency counts and percentages of participants who have opted for the target utterance A and of those who have chosen B. Options A and B correspond to "The bus left me behind", and "I missed the train", respectively.

The results are classified according to the gender variable. The rates with which options A and B have been chosen seem to be equally divided for the female sample, and approximately so for the male population. Accordingly, 50% of female informants and 45% of male ones have opted for response A.

3.1.32 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 19

Situation (6) is similar to Situation (1) in many respects. They are both reproach situations, involving participants of unequal statuses (i.e. Situation (1) involves a manager/employee role-set whereas Situation (6) involves a teacher/student role-set). However, the results for the two situations seem incongruent: While response A was the favoured option for the majority of respondents to Situation 1 (e.g. 52% of male respondents against 74% of female ones chose A), only 45% of male informants against 50% of females have opted for responsibility-avoiding response A in reaction to Situation 2.

We believe that the reason behind the observed inconsistency in the results yielded for Situations (1) and (6) relates to a problem with the input we constructed in the situation at hand. When constructing the questionnaire, we made all A responses into commitment or responsibility avoidance utterances and all B options into straightforward commitment-making speech acts (i.e. including commitments to future action, assertions, or admissions of one's responsibility for negative acts, depending on the situational prompt). We meant to make the distinction between the suggested response options clear-cut. The agency for the negative or blameworthy act is hidden in the target utterance A while emphasized in option B.

One way to emphasize the doer of the action is by placing the agent in subject position as in ‘I missed the bus’ given as input in Situation 6.

It seems that utterance B "zgəlt ttʰobis" or "I missed the bus", which we envisaged at first as a responsibility-admitting response, has not been understood by the respondents as we intended. The meaning of "miss" as "fail to reach, fail to hit, to catch or to meet, etc." is in fact only part of the meaning conveyed in the verb "miss". The main emphasis in this verb is in fact not so much on 'failure' as it is on 'trying' and 'nearly succeeding' to do something. In this sense, the speaker of " zgəlt ttʰobis" (I missed the train) does not mean to say "I failed to catch the bus"; rather, he means to say: "I nearly caught the bus"-i.e. after having made a praiseworthy effort. Emphasis is on near success rather than on failure. Therefore, the utterance given in B "zgəlt ttʰobis" has been rightly assessed by the respondents as being face-saving, and as being an effective responsibility-avoidance strategy.

Table 20: Responses to Situation (6) Classified by Level of Education

Situation (6)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Educational Level	University level		A	24
			B	28	54%
			Total	52	100%
High school level			A	15	48%
			B	16	52%
			Total	31	100%
Junior High school level			A	1	14%
			B	6	86%
			Total	7	100%
Primary school level			A	2	40%
			B	3	60%
			Total	5	100%
Illiterate		A	3	43%	
		B	4	57%	
		Total	7	100%	
Total				109	100%

3.1. 33 Description of Table 20

Table 20 offers a classification of the respondents answers to item 6 of the questionnaire level of education.

3.1.34 Analysis of the Data Presented in table 20

Table 20 shows that the majority of respondents from all educational categories have opted for response B rather than A. The respective rates with which option B has been chosen by the relevant educational categories from highest to lowest are 54%, 52%, 86%, 60%, and 57%. Both blame shifting to other agents, and emphasizing the effort made in achieving a certain goal are responsibility-avoiding strategies, the results outlined above seem to suggest that the respondents assess response B "I missed the bus" not simply as being face-saving, but as more effective as a responsibility-avoiding strategy than option A.

Table 21: Responses to Situation (6) Classified by Age

Situation (6)	Options		response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Classification of responses by age group	15 - 25	A	15	50%
B			15	50%	
Total			30	100%	
26 - 35		A	16	44%	
		B	20	56%	
		Total	36	100%	
36 - 45		A	7	50%	
		B	7	50%	
		Total	14	100%	
46 - 55		A	5	56%	
		B	6	44%	
		Total	11	100%	
56 - 65		A	4	44%	
		B	5	56%	
		Total	9	100%	
Above 65		A	5	56%	
		B	4	44%	
		Total	9	100%	
Total			109	100%	

3.1.35 Description of Table 21

Table 21 above provides an age-based classification of the participants' responses to Situation 6. This classification aims to detect the existence, or otherwise absence, of any consistent pattern of answers observable along the age parameter.

3.1.36 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 21

Table 21 indicates that participants from all six age-ranges are inclined towards both response options A and B. The respondents aged [15-25] and [36-45] for example are equally divided between those who have opted for B and those who have chosen A (i.e. 50% against 50%). The age-groups [26-35] and [56-65] have indicated their choice of responses A and B with the respective rates of 44% and 56%. The remaining age-categories, that is respondents aged [45-55] and those aged above 65, have indicated their preference for response A rather than B in the relatively higher rate of 56%.

The results shown in tables 19, 20, and 21 indicate that the respondents have interpreted responses A and B as responsibility avoidance utterances. The tables also show that the respondents' preference for the first or second strategy appears not to be influenced by the gender, level of education, or age variables, for there is no regular increase or decrease in the rates with which either response option has been chosen as we move from one category of respondents to the other. Therefore, no interdependence between the age of the respondents and their preference for one responsibility avoidance strategy or the other.

Table 22: Responses to Situation (7) Classified by Gender

Situation (7)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Gender	Male		A	40
			B	11	22%
			Total	51	100%
Female			A	50	86%
			B	8	14%
			Total	58	100%
Total				109	100%

3.1. 37 Description of Table 22

Table 22 provides a gender-based classification of the data gathered in response to Situation 7. As a reminder, Situation 7 is a request for information situation, where the interactants are in a hypothetical engagement relationship. The first turn of dialogue is a request speech act about a fixed date for marriage. The question involves a high degree of imposition, particularly that the respondent/addressee in this situation is beginning to have doubts about whether his/her partner is the right person for marriage.

Table 22 shows that Option A, the commitment avoidance response " *nha:r lli jəbyi lla:h* " (i.e. "when God wills it"), has been chosen in considerably high percentages: 78% of male respondents against 86% of their female counterparts.

3.1.38 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 22

Situation 7 counts as a highly face-threatening situation, for the respondent understands that it does not only involve a request for information which the addressee is not willing to give at that moment, but also involves a reproach about the fact that the relationship has lasted for quite a while. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that most of the respondents from both genders have selected the target utterance. The results are compatible with those yielded in response to most of the preceding items as well as with our initial observation and assumption that speakers of Moroccan Arabic tend to avoid commitment more often than they choose to commit themselves explicitly. The target utterance, in item 7, frees the respondent from any responsibility. By choosing utterance A, the speaker is in fact implying that he is not the decision-maker; the one who decides is God. Also, by opting for utterance A, the speaker makes his/her utterance conditional; "when God wills" is equivalent to "we will marry *if/when*
p1
God wills it."Two propositions are involved here, with the first proposition depending entirely
p2

on the second. The hearer is thus left in the dark as to the time of the marriage. Using conditional sentences, especially with an invocation of God, is a very effective and common

commitment avoidance strategy in Moroccan Arabic. And as was confirmed by earlier data, female respondents tend to be more commitment avoiding than males, .

Table 23: Responses to Situation (7) Classified by Level of Education

Situation (7)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Educational level	University level		A	43
			B	09	17%
Total			52	100%	
High school level			A	27	94%
			B	04	13%
		Total	31	100%	
Junior High school level			A	6	86%
			B	1	14%
		Total	7	100%	
Primary school level			A	4	100%
			B	0	0%
		Total	5	100%	
Illiterate			A	7	100%
			B	0	0%
		Total	7	100%	
Total				102	100%

3.1.39 Description of Table 23

Table 23 processes the respondents' answers based on their level of education. The aim is to determine whether or not there is a contingency between the respondents' answers and the educational attainment variable.

3.1.40 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 23

The table shows that the majority of respondents have opted for the commitment avoidance response provided in (A). The rates of informants who have chosen commitment-avoiding response A from the highest educational level to the lowest are 83%, 94%, 86%, 100%, and 100%, respectively. The data shown in this table confirms the conclusions reached in previous analyses concerning the effect of the educational variable on the observed

response pattern: Respondents with a lower level of education are more inclined to avoid commitment than educated respondents.

Table 24: Responses to Situation (7) Classified by Age

		Options	Response options	Frequency	Percentage		
Situation (7)	Classification of responses by age group	15 - 25	A	23	77%		
			B	7	23%		
			Total	30	100%		
		26 - 35	A	29	81%		
			B	7	19%		
			Total	36	100%		
		36 - 45	A	14	100%		
			B	0	0%		
			Total	14	100%		
		46 - 55	A	11	100%		
			B	0	0%		
			Total	11	100%		
		56 - 65	A	9	100%		
			B	0	0%		
			Total	9	100%		
		Above 65	A	9	100%		
			B	0	0%		
			Total	9	100%		
		Total				109	100%

3.1.41 Description of Table 24

Table 24 offers an age-based classification of the participants' responses to the seventh item of the questionnaire. The table at hand indicates that the respective rates of respondents from all six age categories-i.e. [15-25], [26-35], [36-45], [46-55], [56-65], and [above 65]-who have opted for response A are 77%, 81%, 100%, 100%, 100%, and 100%, respectively.

3.1.42 Analysis of The Data Presented in Table 24

In response to the indirect reproach used as a prompt in item 7, the majority of respondents from all age groups have opted for the commitment avoiding response. The response pattern which we observed in previous analyses reoccurs in the results yielded by this item as well: older respondents seem to be more avoiding of commitment than younger respondents.

Table 25: Responses to Situation (8) Classified by Gender

Situation (8)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Gender	Male	A	39	76%
B			12	24%	
Total			51	100%	
Female		A	49	84%	
		B	9	16%	
		Total	58	100%	
Total				109	100%

3.1.43 Description of Table 25

Table 25 presents the informants' responses to Item 8. This item of the questionnaire engages the interlocutors in a hypothetical father-son role-relationship. The respondents assume the role of son/daughter. The father is a heavy smoker. The son/daughter, being discontented with the father's addiction, makes an indirect reproach to the father, in the form of an inquiry as to the date at which the father will give up his/her smoking addiction. In utterance A, the father avoids committing himself to a specific date, by saying that he will try to give up smoking, whereas B is a statement which commits the speaker to the month of January as a time limit. For a detailed description of Situational Prompt 8, see Chapter Four.

Table 25 indicates that the majority of respondents have opted for response A, with male respondents counting for 76% against 84% of female respondents.

3.1.44 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 25

The figures shown on table 25 confirm the general tendency among respondents to avoid commitment. They also confirm the fact that female respondents tend to avoid commitment more than the male respondents do. Because speakers very often find themselves in situations which require them to give promises or announce decisions, speakers have

engineered a number of strategies designed to make their promises unbinding. One such strategy- used in response A- consists in emphasizing effort. It seems that emphasizing effort is both a commitment and a responsibility avoiding strategy. Accordingly, emphasizing future effort is a commitment avoidance strategy, whereas emphasizing past effort is a responsibility avoidance strategy.

Table 26: Responses to Situation (8) Classified by Level of Education

Options	Response Options		Frequency	Percentage
	A	B		
Educational level	University level	A	44	85%
		B	8	15%
		Total	52	100%
	High school level	A	26	84%
		B	5	16%
		Total	31	100%
	Junior High school level	A	7	100%
		B	0	0%
		Total	7	100%
	Primary school level	A	5	100%
		B	0	0%
		Total	5	100%
Illiterate	A	7	100%	
	B	0	0%	
	Total	7	100%	
Total			102	100%

3.1.45 Description of Table 26

Table 26 processes the respondents' answers based on their educational level. It indicates that the relevant education categories -i.e. university, high school level, secondary school level, and elementary, have opted for commitment-avoiding response A in the following respective rates: 85%, 84%, 100%, 100%, and 100%.

3.1. 46 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 26

Table 26 further lends evidence to earlier findings; namely that, speakers of Moroccan Arabic generally tend to avoid commitment, and that less educated respondents tend to be the most of avoiding of commitment. It seems that these results will be supported by later data, particularly in cases where the situation given to the respondents involves a moderate degree of imposition. Politeness is generally reciprocated by politeness. Correspondingly, requests

and reproaches that are assessed as being respectively too imposing and face-threatening, or out of place, and, therefore, impolite, are reacted to with direct, on-record responses.

Table 27: Responses to Situation (8) Classified by Age

Situation (8)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Classification of responses by age group	15 - 25	A	24	80%
B			6	20%	
Total			30	100%	
26 - 35		A	30	83%	
		B	6	17%	
		Total	36	100%	
36 - 45		A	12	86%	
		B	2	14%	
		Total	14	100%	
46 - 55		A	9	82%	
		B	2	18%	
		Total	11	100%	
56 - 65		A	9	100%	
		B	0	0%	
		Total	9	100%	
Above 65		A	9	100%	
		B	0	0%	
		Total	9	100%	
Total			109	100 %	

3.1.47 Description of Table 27

Table 27 presents the frequency and percent distribution of respondents by age group and selected answer. The aim is to verify whether the age variable has incidence on the respondents' choices, and to compare their responses with the response patterns observed in earlier data.

3.1.48 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 27

The general tendency to avoid commitment is reasserted by the results shown on table 27. The data also confirms our finding that older respondents tend to be more avoiding of commitment than younger informants. Thus, 80% 83% 86% 82% 100%, and 100% of the age groups [15-25], [26-35], [36-45], [46-55], [56-65], and [above 65] have opted for choice A, respectively.

Table 28: Responses to Situation (9) Classified by Gender

Situation (9)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Gender	Male		A	31
			B	20	39%
			Total	51	100%
Female			A	47	81%
			B	11	19%
			Total	58	100%
Total				109	100%

3.1.49 Description of Table 28

The table above provides a classification by gender of the respondents' selected answers to item 9 of the questionnaire. For easy readability, we note that this item involves the addressee/respondent in a money-borrowing situation. The situation involves a reproach to the respondent/borrower, in the form of a request for information about the exact date at which the loan will be refunded.

Utterance A, "qri:b, ʔinfæʔəlla:h" (Soon, God willing), involves a conditional sentence where the speaker avoids commitment to any specific future date at which he will return the borrowed money. By contrast, in response B "sməhlijja, walakin maʔəndi:f bæf nrədhum li:k" (Sorry, but I am penniless), the speaker apologizes and directly states that he cannot return the money.

3.1.50 Analysis of the Data Presented In Table 28

The tendency to avoid commitment is a constant throughout the data hitherto analyzed. The results shown on the table further substantiate our earlier observation that female respondents are more avoiding of commitment than male respondents. According to

the figures shown above, 81% of females and 61% of males have opted for a commitment avoidance response. Thus, the majority of gender groups deem it more polite and more face saving to the speaker to avoid giving a specific date as to when the money will be paid back.

The respondents' preference for response A rather than B seems plausible, for response A gives the hearer hope that he will be refunded. It simultaneously allows the speaker not to commit, and bind, himself to any specific date. Respondents may also have assessed response A as being the more peaceful, less upsetting option. They seem to have judged this option as a leeway out of a potential confrontation with the hearer.

Table 29: Responses to Situation (9) Classified by Level of Education

Situation (9)	Options		Response options	Frequency	percentage
	Educational level	University level	A	40	77%
B			12	23%	
Total			52	100%	
High school level		A	26	84%	
		B	5	16%	
		Total	31	100%	
Junior High school level		A	6	86%	
		B	1	14%	
		Total	7	100%	
Primary school level		A	2	40%	
		B	3	60%	
		Total	5	100%	
Illiterate		A	4	57%	
		B	3	43%	
		Total	7	100%	
Total			102	100%	

3.1.51 Description of Table 29

Table 29 offers a classification of the respondents' answers by level of education variable. The aim is to determine whether the level of education variable has any incidence on the participants' selected answers.

3.1.52 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 29

As expected, the tendency to avoid commitment in response to this item of the questionnaire is made clearly manifest by respondents from most educational levels.

However, the response pattern observed in earlier data, where less educated respondents tend to be more avoiding of commitment than educated ones is not maintained as far as this item is concerned. While the majority of respondents with levels of education ranging from university, high school, and secondary school have chosen a commitment avoidance response in response to item 9, respondents with a primary school level of education and those with no education at all have opted for the non-obligating utterance in comparatively far less percentages: 77%, 84%, and 71% of respondents with university, high school, and secondary school levels, respectively, have indicated their choice of response A, whereas illiterate respondents and those with a primary school education have chosen the same response with the respective rates of 57% and 40%.

These results come in opposition to the previously encountered response pattern, where illiterate respondents chose response A unanimously (e.g. As they did in response to Situations 8, 7, 4, 2, and 1 for instance). The results remain meaningful and plausible nonetheless. It seems that the less educated informants believe that it is not impolite or face-damaging to simply state that one is short of money and that this is the reason why the loan has not been paid. It appears as well that some of these respondents, particularly those with a primary school level of education, having shown a preference for option B, believe that utterance A is not suitable in this situation, for the moneylender's reproach in item 9 (i.e. "You took very long. When will you give me back my money") suggests that he is too frustrated and angry to accept an answer such as "soon" or "God willing". Thus, illiterate respondents and those with a primary school educational level may have judged that option A can potentially cause more upset between S and H, and that it may even raise serious doubts in H as to whether S intends or has ever intended to return the loan at all.

Table 30: Responses to Situation (9) Classified by Age

Situation (9)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Classification of responses by age group	15 - 25	A	23	77%
B			7	23%	
Total			30	100%	
26 - 35		A	30	83%	
		B	6	17%	
		Total	36	100%	
36 - 45		A	11	79%	
		B	3	21%	
		Total	14	100%	
46 - 55		A	7	64%	
		B	4	36%	
		Total	11	100%	
56 - 65		A	3	33%	
		B	6	67%	
		Total	9	100%	
Above 65		A	4	44%	
		B	5	56%	
		Total	9	100%	
Total			109	100%	

3.1.53 Description of Table 30

In this table, the data gathered in response to item 9 of the questionnaire is classified according to the age variable. The aim is to find out whether the respondents' selected choices are affected by their age profiles.

3.1.54 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 30

It seems that the age variable affects the way participants interpret the response options provided as input in item 9. Contrary to the response patterns shown in earlier age-classified analyses of the data (i.e. Option A has been selected unanimously by older informants in response to Situations 8, 7, and 4 for instance) , older respondents, particularly those aged [56-65] and above 65, indicate their preference for response B rather than a commitment avoidance utterance. 33% of the respondents aged between 56 and 65 years, and 44% of those above 65 have opted for utterance B while the majority of younger-aged respondents have chosen option A.

We may attribute the inconsistency we noted above concerning the responses provided by older respondents to item 9 in comparison with those they gave to preceding items to the fact that these respondents perceive option A not only as being more face-damaging to them than option B, but also as being potentially conducive to upset between S and H, as explained in section 3.1.52.

We may as well attribute this incongruence in results to another factor. If we assume that there is a socio-cultural pragmatic maxim that states: "Do not make a promise unless you are certain you can keep it.", then, in this case, the older respondents can be said to be more observing of such a maxim than younger ones. Younger respondents seem to disregard the risk of face-damage on the long term, and to value immediate face-saving. By contrast, older respondents seem to place more value on attending to their commitments when made. Though no commitment is made in utterance A about the time at which the loan will be paid, the utterance "Soon, God willing" still implies commitment to paying back the loan. It appears that older respondents have assessed option B as a commitment-making speech act rather than the opposite, and have thus chosen response B, which they perceive as the comparatively more face-saving alternative.

Table 31: Responses to Situation (10) Classified by Gender

Situation 10	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Gender	Male		A	48
			B	3	6%
			Total	51	100%
Female			A	58	100%
			B	0	0%
			Total	58	100%

3.1.56 Data Classification and Analysis of Situation 10

The data presented in table 31 is classified by gender, and provides numerical descriptions of the participants' response choices to item 10 of the questionnaire, according to the gender variable.

The data shown in Table 31 has been gathered in response to Situation 10. Item 10 is in many respects similar to item 9 of the questionnaire, except that the exchange in Situation 10 is not between two friends, but between a father and his son. The initiator of the exchange, the son, reminds the father of a promise he had made. In the given context, the father had made a deal with his son that if he manages to pass his exams, the father will buy him a computer. The son fulfilled his part of the bargain, and expects his father to fulfill his. The prompting utterance in Situation 10 thus reads: "When are you going to buy me the computer you promised, Dad?" The utterance counts as a reminder and a request for information.

Two alternatives have been provided for the respondents; choice A, a commitment avoidance utterance which reads "You will have your computer, God willing", and choice B, where the speaker informs the son that the computer cannot be bought because it is not affordable at the moment.

3.1.57 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 31

In reaction to item 10, both male and female respondents indicate their preference for a commitment avoidance utterance in remarkably high percentages. We notice that the female respondents display this preference in higher rates than their male counterparts. 94% of males against 100% of females have opted for utterance A, i.e. for the commitment avoidance choice. It appears that the need for face saving is more pressing to the respondents when the addressee is an intimate than when s/he is not (i.e. as in Situation 9 for example).

This finding seems to counter Leech's (1983: 127) claim that the degree of indirectness and politeness increases as social distance between S and H becomes more pronounced. Leech (ibid.: 127) contends that the greater the horizontal social distance of H

from S, the greater the need for indirectness. Leech's account, specifically of the Tact Maxim, seems to be ethnocentric in nature, for it articulates the notion of tact more from the point of view of Anglo-Saxon culture. The framework of Brown and Levinson (1987) is in our view a more accommodating model. These authors (1987: 76) maintain that the weightiness of an FTA is calculated¹⁰ by aggregating the values representing the speaker's assessment of the dimensions of social distance, power, and ranking of imposition, which implies that speakers' notion of face, including speakers' assessments of the kind of persons entitled to face-protection, is culturally defined.

Table 32: Responses to Situation (10) Classified by Level of Education

Situation (10)	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Educational level	University level		A	52
			B	0	0%
Total			52	100%	
High school level			A	29	94%
			B	2	6%
		Total	31	100%	
Junior High school level			A	6	86%
			B	1	14%
		Total	7	100%	
Primary school level			A	5	100%
			B	0	0%
		Total	5	100%	
Illiterate			A	7	100%
			B	0	0%
		Total	7	100%	
Total				102	100%

3.1.58 Description of Table 32

The data in Table 32 is classified by educational level. The aim is to investigate the effect of this independent variable on the respondents' choices. The figures show that the respondents from all five educational levels, i.e. university, high school, secondary,

10. Brown and Levinson (1987: 76) suggest that the weightiness of an FTA is calculated, using the following formula: $W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x$

elementary, and illiterate respondents, have opted for response A with the following rates 100%, 94%, 86%, 100%, and 100% respectively.

3.1.59 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 32

It seems that the conclusion at which we arrived in our analysis of the gender-based classification of data (concerning Situations 9 and 10) applies to the data classified by level of education as well. The tendency to avoid commitment among respondents of all educational levels, and of both genders, seems stronger when addressing an intimate than it is when addressing a socially distant or non-intimate interlocutor. This is manifest in the results presented above, particularly if compared to the data yielded for item 9, where the interlocutor is a non-intimate. In response to Situation 9, for instance, respondents with a primary school level of education together with illiterate respondents have selected utterance A at remarkably lower rates, 40% and 57% respectively. However, in reaction to item 10, which we purposefully intended to be similar to item 9, these same respondents unanimously opted for a commitment avoidance choice.

It seems moreover that the participants' reactions to item 10 of the questionnaire are not affected by any of the variables examined so far. It is, rather, the nature of the relationship between the interlocutors that seems to determine the respondents' choices in a more significant manner. We expect the age-based classification of the data to yield more or less similar results.

Table 33: Responses to situation (10) Classified by Age

Situation 10	Options		Response options	Frequency	Percentage
	Classification of responses by age group	15 - 25	A	28	93%
B			2	7%	
Total			30	100%	
26 - 35		A	36	100%	
		B	0	0%	
		Total	36	100%	
36 - 45		A	14	100%	
		B	0	0%	
		Total	14	100%	
46 - 55		A	11	100%	
		B	0	0%	
		Total	11	100%	
56 - 65		A	9	100%	
		B	0	0%	
		Total	9	100%	
Above 65		A	8	89%	
		B	1	11%	
		Total	9	100%	
Total			109	100%	

3.1.60 Description of Table 33

A classification of the data according to the age variable is presented above. The aim is to detect the existence, or otherwise absence, of any correlation between the age variable and the participants’ most frequently chosen response.

3.1.6.1 Analysis of the Data Presented in Table 33

The numerical figures shown above confirm our observation that responses to item 10 do not correlate with any of the social variables taken into account by the study, including the age variable. Respondents aged [15-25], [26-35], [36-45], [46-55], [56-65], and those aged above 65 have indicated their preference for a commitment avoidance utterance with the respective rates of 93%, 100%, 100%, 100%, 100% ,and 89%. These results seems to confirm that more consideration and indirectness is shown vis à vis a family relation. In this sense, respondents show more consideration toward intimates than non-intimates; an observation which follows from the fact that a total number of 106 out of 109 respondents

(i.e. 94% of respondents) have opted for a commitment avoidance utterance in response to item 10.

Brown and Levinson (1987) posit that the degree of indirectness and politeness increases as social distance between S and H becomes more pronounced. This contention seems to counter the results presented in Table 31. However, this need not be established as a finding of fact. There is need for conducting several investigations before one can confirm whether or not our assumption is true. Presenting this assumption as a conclusive finding would certainly require more than one context of use. For now, however, it would be plausible to state based on the figures shown above that the respondents are concerned for maintaining harmony with intimates more than others.

So far, we have been dealing with the classification and analysis of the data gathered through the dual-choice questionnaire. We have presented the frequency counts and rates representing the informants' responses. The response options provided for each item is a two-point, dichotomous scale presenting options that are opposite to one another -i.e. a commitment or responsibility avoidance utterance and a commissive or responsibility-admitting utterance. The tables devised for each item have provided therefore a classification of the data according to the two response options given as input for the respondents, and also according to the three parameters taken into consideration by the study (i.e. gender, level of education, and age). The purpose is to determine whether Moroccan Arabic speakers tend to avoid commitment/responsibility as well as examine whether the variables of gender, level of education, and age have any bearing on the respondents' choices. The dual-variable data classification used in this study has made it possible to identify the dominant patterns present in the data, and also to determine how the responses of the different groups surveyed by the study differ from one another.

Based on the analysis of the data, we have come to the conclusion that the general tendency among speakers of Moroccan Arabic is to avoid commitment/responsibility, at times

by unanimity. Another no less important finding we have been able to identify is that, as a general rule, female, less educated, and older respondents tend to be more avoiding of commitment/responsibility than their male, educated, and younger counterparts. Our data analyses have also revealed that this tendency is reversed when the request and blame situations provided are of considerable face-threat.

The next section presents the data gathered through the DCT. The respondents have been asked to respond to the ten request and accusation situations included in this instrument by providing their own input. We, therefore, consider the corpus of data obtained through this questionnaire to be more interesting, richer, and to be conducive to better and deeper qualitative insights. Section 3.2, entitled Classification and Analysis of the DCT Data, provides a classification and an analysis of the respondent-formulated commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances into different strategy categories.

3.2 Classification and Analysis of the Discourse Completion Test Data

In section 3.1, we have classified and processed the data elicited by the dual-choice questionnaire. The present section describes and analyzes the data collected through the DCT. Unlike the dual-choice questionnaire, the DCT is a qualitative data collection instrument that acts as a stimulus-driven production task. As such, the analysis of the data is more qualitative in nature.

Based on the respondents' output, we have been able to arrange respondent-formulated commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances into different strategies. The DCT data is analyzed, not according to the items of the questionnaire, but according to the strategies derived from the respondents' chosen answers. Accordingly, this section of Chapter 4 presents and describes in an orderly manner the different strategies which the respondents have unconsciously adopted in writing (or uttering) their responses. Each of these strategies is further supported and illustrated using the respondents' answers to the DCT items. By way of

summary, a table showing the frequency counts and percent values for each strategy is provided at the end of the chapter.

3.2.1 Strategy 1: Shifting Responsibility/Blame to Other Agents:

One way to avoid responsibility is to place it on persons and agents other than oneself. This strategy is by far the most commonly used by the respondents, with a frequency count of 175 times (and a rate of 24, 75%). As we read through the respondents' output, we have observed that blame shifting is realized linguistically in two ways:

- (a) Topicalization of the 'blamed' agent without mention of the self.
- (b) Objectivization of the self.

In syntax, topicalization is a mechanism that establishes a word, or expression, usually a noun phrase, as the sentence or clause topic by having it appear at the front of the sentence or clause. Using this syntactic mechanism, the speaker puts at the forefront, and therefore at the center of focus, persons or things on whom or on which to place responsibility. For illustration, the following utterances have been selected from the DCT:

- (44) S^ʕahbi lli kənt wəsⁱ:tu ʕla l-pesse djalək huwa lli mazæɫ mʕət^ʕlɲa ʔa wəɫdi.
The friend whom I entrusted to bring the computer is the one who got us late, son..
- (45) lʒuw mamʕawnnæʃ.
The weather didn't help.
- (46) lhæris rrasmi kæn məʕt^ʕu:b.
The goalkeeper was injured.
- (47) ttobi:s ʒa mʕətt^ʕəl.
The bus was late.
- (48) lmagana mas^ʕonətʃ.
The alarm did not set off.
- (49) ssijara fiha muʃkil.
There is a problem with the car.

(50) lləʕaba matʕəbquʕ lɣuttʕa djali.
The players did not comply with the game plan.

(51) ttəsʕih mæʕi huwa hadæk.
Test correction was inadequate.

(52) lmərku:b kan qli:l.
Public transportation was scarce .

(53) lʔasatida makajhəmluni:ʕ.
The teachers hate me

(54) ddʕorof kænət ɣajr mulæʔima.
The circumstances were not convenient.

(55) lkora mərri trəbhək mərri txəsrək.
Football makes you win at times and lose at others

Based on the data presented above, this ‘other’ agent may range from a person or group of people, an inanimate object, unspecified circumstances, unknown agent(s), to a technical problem.

Another way to shift responsibility to other agents, as noted earlier, is by presenting the self as a victim of X or of circumstances and factors beyond the speaker's control. The pronoun 'I' appears as the object of a predicate or of a preposition. The utterances below are representative of this type of strategy:

(56) tkərfsʕu ʕlija fətəsʕhi:h.
The test correction was unfair

(57) dʕəlmuni lʔasatida.
The teachers were unfair to me.

(58) masʕonatʕ lija lmagana.
The alarm did not ring

(59) matʕəmʕu:ʕ lija lflu:s.

I could not save any money.

(60) tʃətʰəl ʃlija sijəd lli kənt wəsʰetu ʃla l pesse.
The man I asked to bring the computer did not show up on time.

(61) ɦrəgni tʰobis.
The bus drove past me.

(62) tsəd ʃlija lbæb.
The door closed.

(63) bæʃuli nmərti
My exam code was sold.

(64) sərquli nmərti
My exam code was stolen.

(65) xəsra:t li tʰomobi:l.
The car has broken down.

(66) ʃtʰəlni lombutʰejaʒ
I was held up in a traffic jam

(67) ʃæddi:n mʃaja dʰədʰ; mabyæwʃ jnəʒhu:ni
They are against me all the time; they don't want me to succeed.

(68) xrəʒ ʃlija rijadijæt
The Maths teacher has ruined it all for me.

As one reads through these utterances, it becomes clear that the purpose of this strategy is 'self-victimization'. In fact, most of the strategies we will consider below have the same purpose, namely, to victimize the self in one way or another. This specific strategy, which involves the use of an utterance structure in which the speaker is the object of the predicate or the preposition has the effect of optimizing or rendering more effective, the speaker's intent to present himself as the victim.

3.2.2 Strategy 2: Renewing the Commitment without Specification of Time

Another strategy often and commonly employed by users of Moroccan Arabic with the purpose of avoiding commitment is to renew commitment without mention of any specific date. Most of these commitment renewals come in the form of requests for postponement. Making a commitment that is not bound to any fixed time makes the commitment too flaccid to be called a commitment at all, for the utterance then ceases to have the inherently binding value typical of a commissive. This strategy has been used by the respondents with a frequency of 115 out of 707 times (16,26%) both to avoid commitment to a future course of action, and to avoid responsibility for a blameworthy past action. The following utterances have been elicited from the DCT for illustration:

(69) s^bbər ʕlija hæd saʕa.
Give me more time.

(70) s^bbər ʕlija mazæɫ.
Give me some more time.

(71) xælli li:na ʃwijja djal lwəqt nfəkro fi:h.
Give us more time to think.

(72) lla:h jkərmək ʕt^eeni wəqt ktər.
May God honor you, give me more time.

(73) s^bbər ʕlija htta ndi:r mʕæk ʃi hħəl.
Be patient till we find a solution.

(74) flu:sæk ʔadja tʒi:k; ʔi s^bbər ʕlija wæhd ʃwija.
You will have your money; just be a little more patient.

(75) ʕt^eena fors^aa nʕərfu bəʕd^sijjatna bəʕda.
Give us a chance to know each other first.

(76) ra:ni ʔadi nqətʰəŋ lgaru.
I am going to quit smoking.

(77) fʔaqrab forsʰa nrəd li:k flu:sk.
As soon as possible, I will pay you back.

(78) fi lqari:b lfaʒil.
As soon as possible.

(79) mərɾa xəra nfuzu ɲsəʔəlla:h.
We will win next time, God willing.

(80) l- kora hiʒa hadi. mərɾa xəra nəddarku l- ʔaʔla:tʰ djalna.
That's football. Next time, we'll correct our mistakes.

3.2.3 Strategy 3: Using Conditional Sentences

The use of conditional sentences as non-committal utterances has had 85 occurrences on the DCT; that is, with the rate of 12%. MA speakers often have recourse to binding their propositions with certain conditions in order to avoid commitment to a future date or to performing a certain action. Conditional sentences have also been used as a means to avoid admitting responsibility for a blameworthy past action. By making one proposition dependent on another, the speaker places his own personal will/responsibility outside the equation, thus ridding himself of any kind of responsibility in case the statement is found to be false or the promise is not kept. The utterances below exemplify this strategy:

(81) ɦta nʃərfək baʔjani d- bsʰəɦ ʃəd nəzʃəm.
When I am sure you truly love me, then I'll take a step forward.

(82) ɦta nwəʒdu ra:sna.
We'll marry when we're ready.

(83) ɦta ndi:r w nrəd li:k flu:sk.
I'll pay you back when I am well-off.

(84) *ħtta nkuwwən rasi.*

When I am financially ready.

(85) *ħtta nhəʒ, nqətʃu f mərri nfæʔəlla:h.*

When I have performed the pilgrimage, then, I'll quit smoking.

(86) *ʔida kənt msəli nwəsʃələk.*

I'll give you a ride if I am free.

(87) *ħtta jkunu l-flu:s.*

When there is money.

(88) *ħtta nzidu nʃərfu bəʃdʃijjatna.*

When we'll have known each other better.

It can be observed that, at times, the speaker resorts to a compound conditional sentence, if we may so call it, as he conditions the predicated act with more than one condition as in (85) above :

(85) *ħtta nhəʒ, nqətʃu f mərri, nfæʔəlla:h*

When I have performed the pilgrimage, then, I'll quit smoking.

In (85), the speaker sets two conditions: his performing the pilgrimage, and God's will. Very often, speakers can set vague conditions, using ellipsis. In utterance (83), for instance,

(83) *ħtta ndi:r w nrəd li:k flu:sk.*

I'll pay you back when I am well off.

the speaker deliberately omits the object of the transitive verb 'do' only to add to the utterance's lack of commissiveness.

3.2.4 Strategy 4: Using Fatalistic Expressions

Among the strategies most frequently used by the respondents, and which we have ranked as the fourth strategy, is one where the speaker avoids commitment by stating that God, or fate, is the only and primary agent responsible for all happenings. This strategy has a rate of occurrence of 9,75%, which corresponds to a frequency count of 69. We chose to

combine utterances where mention of God is made with those where fate is emphasized within the same category; on the one hand, because it is culturally believed that God decrees fate, and, on the other hand, because Muslims generally use the two words interchangeably.

Below is a set of utterances illustrating the fourth strategy. The utterances are categorized into two different classes: (a) utterances emphasizing God's/Fate's responsibility for past happenings, and (b) utterances emphasizing God's/Fate's responsibility for future happenings.

(a) Utterances emphasizing God's/fate's responsibility for past happenings:

(89) qaddara lla:hu, wa mæ fæʔa faʕal.
God decrees, and what He wills He does.

(90) tæʕja ma ddi:r; matæmfj yi:r fi:n mæʕfæk lla:h.
One goes only where God takes one.

(91) lla:h yæləb
There wasn't much we could do about it.

(92) masəhəlf lla:h hæd lʕæm.
God hasn't decreed that I make it this year.

(93) lla:h jdi:r fj tawi:l djal lʕer.
May God make things better.

(94) lla:h jhdi:na w sʕafi.
May God show us the right path.

(95) lla:h jʒi:b leʕfu mæn ʕəndu.
May God bestow His pardon on us.

(96) jəxləf ʕəli:k lla:h.
May God reward you.

(97) jxəlsʕək lla:h.
May God pay you back.

(b) *Utterances emphasizing God's/Fate's responsibility for future happenings*

(98) *nha:r jəktæb.*

The day God wills it.

(99) *fæʃ jəktæb.*

When God wills it.

(100) *wəqt mma ktæb.*

Whenever fate decides it.

(101) *nha:r jəktæb ʁadi ntzuwʒu.*

We'll get married when God decides it.

(102) *ħtta jhi:n lla:h.*

Until God decides.

(103) *kulʃi qisma w nas^ʕi:b.*

All things are predestined.

(104) *kul ħaʒa bʔaʒalha.*

There is an appointed time for everything.

(105) *kul ħaʒa bwəqtha.*

There is a time for everything.

The utterances enlisted in category (a) and their like have been used in the DCT to avoid responsibility for past actions mainly. Stressing God's responsibility for past happenings is a very effective way of denying S's responsibility for negative acts in reaction to face-threatening acts, such as reproaches. The utterances presented in category (b), on the other hand, have been used by the respondents to avoid commitment to a future action, or to a future date. While most of the utterances that have been used to avoid taking blame or admitting responsibility for one's actions come in the form of prayers, those used to avoid commitment to a future date or future action come in the form of conditional sentences. This means that more than one commitment avoidance strategy can be used simultaneously. This

fact is clearly illustrated by the utterances shown in category (b) (See utterances (62), (61), (60), and (59)), where the speaker uses a conditional sentence and emphasizes God's or fate's agency, thereby avoiding commitment and minimizing his/her agency for the predicated act.

3.2.5 Strategy five: Emphasizing Past, Present, or Future Effort

In many cases, respondents to the DCT choose to avoid commitment/responsibility by placing value on the effort that was made, is being made, or will be made in the fulfillment or performance of a particular action. For example, instead of apologizing for their negative acts or directly admitting their responsibility for those acts, respondents would underscore the effort they have made toward performing the action in response to reproaches. Similarly, in response to requests they are not willing to fulfill, the respondents would avoid directly accepting or rejecting the request, and would instead emphasize the effort they will make to meet the request. This strategy has been used with a frequency count of 45 (6%). For illustration, we provide the following examples:

(106) bajət lila səhra:n kanraʒəŋ.
I stayed up all night studying.

(107) rani kanhæwəl nqətʰŋu.
I am trying to quit smoking.

(108) bqi:t kanwəʒʒəd lli:l kullu ʔa ʔustad. manʕəstf li:l kullu.
I spent the whole night preparing, Sir. I was awake all night.

(109) dərt ʒəhdi ʔu maʒəbf lla:h.
I tried my best to succeed, but God has decreed otherwise.

(110) dərt ktər mən ʒəhdi walakin maktəbf.
I tried my best to succeed, but fate has decreed otherwise.

(111) zgəlt tobi:s ʒla fwijja.
I almost caught the bus.

(112) waxa xdəmt manʒəhtʃ.
Although I worked hard, I failed.

(113) lɛæm ʒʒæj ndi:r foq ʒəhdi nʃæʔəlla:h.
Next year, I'll try more than I can God willing.

3.2.6 Strategy 6: Renewing Commitment with Specification of Time

The strategy which came under the section title “renewing commitment without setting a fixed date” ranks as the second strategy in terms of frequency of use. The sixth strategy discussed in this section also involves renewal of commitment with a postponement of the due date, except that the date here is specified. Commitment renewal with specification of the date has had 29 occurrences (4, 10%). Utterances exemplifying this strategy include:

(114) yədda nʒi:b lək flu:sk.
Tomorrow, I'll bring you your money.

(115) jɔxul ʃhər nəʃrih li:k.
I'll buy it for you at the beginning of next month.

(116) mən hna ləʃʃija, jku:nu ʒəndək.
You will have (your money) this afternoon.

(117) wahəd təlt jəm w nrəd li:k flu:sk.
I'll pay you back in three days time.

One distinction to be noted between the above strategy (i.e. renewing commitment with specification of the date) and renewing commitment without specification of the date is that the former strategy is often expressed in the form of a request for postponing the performance of an act while the latter is expressed in the form of a promise to perform the act. It appears that the respondents feel the need to use a more polite formula for their utterances when the strategy they use involves a high degree of lack of commitment, as when the date

for the fulfillment of the promised act is not set (e.g. ζ afæk, s^bær ζ lija ζ wija) . In this sense, the less commitment is involved in an utterance, the more polite its realization, and conversely, the more commitment is involved in an utterance, the more direct and less polite is its realization (e.g. nha:r læxmi:s ζ kunu ζ ændæk).

3.2.7 Strategy 7: Prioritizing Personal Need

In response to face-threatening acts, such as requests, which respondents are not willing to comply with, respondents may choose to avoid commitment by prioritizing their personal need over the need of the requester. Through this strategy, the speaker avoids rejecting the request directly and makes certain that the requester will not insist on his request or complain that it has not been met since s/he is given to understand that both of them have the need for the requested item. This strategy has been used 23 times (3, 25%) by the respondents. Examples of this strategy include:

(118) ζ ændi biha ζ i yarad; ma ζ ændi kindi:r næ ζ te li:k tomobi:l.
I need (the car) myself, so I can't possibly lend it to you.

(119) ζ ttta ana msafær m ζ a mwali:n dda:r.
I, too, will travel with my family.

(120) ζ ændi yarad muhim.
I have something important to do.

(121) mæhtæ ζ læt^somobi:l hæd l ζ usbu: ζ .
I need the car this week.

3.2.8 Strategy 8: Expressing Future Hope

The eighth strategy, which has been used in the DCT 22 times (3, 11%), involves utterances in which the speaker avoids commitment/responsibility by expressing his/her faith in a better future. Some of the utterances involving the use of this strategy include:

(122) n ζ æwd^soha mæra xæra n ζ æ ζ lla:h.
We make it up next time, God willing.

(123) jku:n xer.
Let's hope for the best.

3.2.9 Strategy 9: Reference to Luck

As the title indicates, in strategy 9, the respondents refer to lack of luck or to the possible absence or presence of luck in the future rather than to their failure to do A or to their unwillingness to fulfill the addressee's request, respectively. We initially expected this strategy to rank higher among our list of strategies, but it has turned out that respondents have used it with a frequency of 20 times only (3, 11%). The following utterances have been selected for illustration:

(124) masaʕəfnæf lhadʕ.
We were unlucky.

(125) makənnæf fə nhærna.
It wasn't our lucky day.

(126) zzhər makænʃ
There was no luck.

(127) maʕəndi zhər.
I am unlucky.

(128) wa nta w zəhrək
It depends on your luck.

(129) dərɪ ktər mən ʒəhdi, walakin maʕəndi zhər.
I did more than I could, but I am unlucky.

Through this strategy, speakers blame the negative acts they committed on sheer chance. More often, however, fortune and misfortune are perceived not merely as the result of chance and hazard, but as the result of the workings of a mysterious force operating for good or ill in their lives. Some people even have a stronger belief in 'luck' and 'fortune' than they have in the religious notions of 'fate' and 'destiny'. This 'force', which Moroccan people

believe in, and which we find very strongly present in MA language use, is part of the deep-seated and strongly anchored beliefs in the Moroccan culture and mindset.

3.2.10 Strategy 10: Feigning Ignorance

As the name of the strategy suggests, denying to have the required information also serves as a commitment/responsibility avoidance strategy. This strategy has been opted for by the respondents 20 times (2, 82%), and has been expressed on the DCT through such formulas as:

(130) Ila:hu ?a?lam.
God knows best.

(131) ma?əndi:ʃ ʕli:ha ma?lumæt kafəjin.
I don't know enough about her.

(132) nəkdəb ʕli:k ?a xuja? s'araħa ma?rəftʃ.
To tell you the truth, brother, I don't know.

(133) ma?rəftʃ ; kaygulu nnæs ʕli:ha ʃi ħwajəʒ, walakin rah Ila:hu ?a?lam.
I have no idea; I hear people say things about her here and there, but it's God who knows best.

On most occasions, respondents to the DCT opted for the use of the tenth strategy, denying knowledge of information, in combination with the fourth strategy, emphasizing the agency of God, particularly in response to requests for information that the speaker would rather withhold. God's superior knowledge is emphasized by way of saying that the speaker's own knowledge is far inferior and is, therefore, not to be believed or taken as true. Other formulas overtly signify that the speaker has no knowledge at all, or does not know enough to provide the requester with the kind of information he needs.

3.2.11 Strategy 11: Violating/Flouting the Relation Maxim

In their attempt to avoid commitment, a number of respondents provide an answer

that bears little or no relevance to the interlocutor's utterance. Instances of such apparently irrelevant responses include the following:

(134) mər̄ra rab̄hi:n mər̄ra xasri:n.
We win at times and lose at others.

(135) lkora fi:ha rrabəḥ w lxəsər.
There are winners and losers in any football game.

(136) lga:rru rah mamzjanf.
Smoking is bad.

(137) tadxi:n mod^ser bs^eḥa fiḥlan.
Smoking is unhealthy indeed.

(138) lla:h jkəməl bəl̄xer.
May all things go well.

(139) lla:h jəḥfu ʕla lʒami:ʕ, ʔa wəldi.
May God forgive us all, son.

In each of the above utterances, the speaker clearly avoids commitment by pretending to be simply making a statement. For example, utterances (134) and (135) were given in response to a reporter's indirect reproach, expressed in the interrogative mood as "Why did you lose the match?". A relevant answer in this case should be in the form of a statement of the reasons why the game was lost. Instead, many respondents chose to avoid responsibility by stating an obvious fact about football, thereby avoiding the reporter's question. In like manner, utterances (136) and (137), which were given by the respondents in reply to the indirect reproach/question "When will you quit smoking?", also state known facts about smoking that bear no relevance to the interlocutor's question. More interesting are utterances (138) and (139), where the respondents blatantly violate the Relation Maxim, not by stating known facts, but by irrelevantly expressing future hope in response to the requests/reproaches addressed to them. In utterance (138) (i.e. "lla:h jkəməl bəl̄xer"), for example, the speaker expresses hope that the addressee will fare well in his/her future marriage in response to a

request for information about the respondent's neighbor. Also, in utterance (139) (i.e. Ila:h jəʃfu ʁla lʒami:ʃ), the speaker expresses hope that he will stop smoking to avoid committing himself to a fixed quit-smoking date. This strategy has been employed by the respondents 15 out of 707 times (2,12%)

It should be noted that, despite their apparent irrelevance, the utterances in question are meaningful: The production of utterances that are not directly relevant to the topic only signals to the hearer the presence of an implicature (See Grice (1989: 33)). By breaching Grice's Maxim of Relation, the speaker indicates that the topic brought up by the hearer is not one with which s/he is comfortable and that s/he, therefore, wishes the conversation about that topic would end at that point.

3.2.12 Strategy 12: Offering Unrequested Advice

The twelfth strategy consists in the offer of advice with the purpose of avoiding commitment. This strategy has had a frequency count of 15 out of 707 (i.e. 2, 12%). For illustration, in utterance (142) below, the speaker (a father) avoids setting a quit-smoking date. The kind of information the hearer (the son) expects is not provided at all. In a very astute, and devious manner, the speaker shifts the conversation to an entirely different topic, giving non-solicited advice only to avoid making the commitment that the hearer expects. Similarly, in utterance (145), the speaker chooses to advise the hearer instead of providing him/her with the information s/he needs about the neighbor he is interested in marrying.

(140) wəldi rak ʃəfti hælti ki wəllæt bəlgarru; maddi:rʃ fħæli.
Son, you can see how my health has become because of smoking. Do not pick up this bad habit.

(141) xu:d mən xəba:rha.
Ask about her.

(142) Ili galli:k ra:sk di:ru.
Do as you wish.

(143) sʕəlli sʕalæt ləʔistixara.
Do the Istikhara prayer (a prayer for divine guidance).

(144) suwwəl fī həd ʔaxur.
Ask someone else.

(145) suwwəl ʕəla ra:sk.
It is in your interest that you get informed about her/him.

Of note is that answering a request for information or a reproach with a piece of advice also counts as a flouting of the Relation Maxim. Utterance (143) (i.e. "sʕəlli sʕalæt ləʔistixara") is particularly interesting in this respect: By exploiting the maxim of relation, the speaker generates two implicatures: the first is that the speaker does not wish to provide the relevant information, and the second, which follows from the first, is that he does not wish to provide H with the relevant information because his/her neighbor is infamous.

Though the hearer may be able to work out that the reason why S did not provide him/her with any information about the neighbor is that this neighbor has a bad reputation, and that S does not wish to speak ill of his/her neighbor, the speaker of utterance (143) cannot be said to have given any information about the neighbor, disfavorable or otherwise. If the speaker is blamed by the neighbor who learned that S played a part in ruining her/his prospective marriage, S may always deny that s/he has done so, for s/he did not commit himself to any specific answer.

3.2.13 Strategy 13: Being Tentative/Using Modality

The analysis of the DCT has also shown that the making of a non-committal can be achieved by means of a modal verb. Halliday (1976: 188) draws a distinction between 'modality' and 'modulation'. For him, 'modality' is "the speaker's assessment of probability and predictability." Using modality, the speaker qualifies his involvement in the truth value of the proposition expressed. This means that modal verbs are grammaticalized expressions of the

speaker's perspective or of his attitude toward a certain action or state of affairs. To illustrate the notion of 'modality', we suggest the following example:

(146) "*It's possible* that they eloped together."

Halliday categorizes modality as an interpersonal function since the speaker as 'declarer' expresses his attitude toward his own speech role; his attitude toward the content of the clause "They eloped together", which is an assessment (by the speaker) of that clause as a probability. Modulation, on the other hand, "is part of the ideational content of the clause" (Halliday, 1976: 188). It relates to the content of the clause rather than to the judgment of the speaker. In this sense, modality is tentative; it relates to the speaker's assessment of probability and predictability whereas modulation indicates whether a proposition is obligatory, permissible, or advisable not according to the speaker, but according to a certain norm, such as law, or convention. "Drivers *must* put on their seat belts" is an example of modulation¹¹.

Strategy 13 is obviously connected with modality rather than modulation since the speaker indicates his/her assessment of the degree of probability of a proposition. In the case of commissive speech acts, modal choice can be said to indicate the speaker's subjective view of an action (at utterance level) as realizable or unrealizable at a future point in time. In our view, this is so because commitment avoidance strategies usually aim to lessen the involvement of the speaker rather than emphasize it; consequently, we expect the modals used in a non-committal to have the function of mitigating S's degree of commitment. For instance, a modal verb such as 'can't' offers the language user the possibility to signal or

11. Halliday (1976: 187) explains that though the two labels of 'modality' and modulation' are set independently, they are related, and very often overlap. Modulation, for example, can be both interpersonal and ideational in function. Halliday (1976: 188) posits that while both utterances (147) "Jones is required to resign" and (148) "Jones *must* resign" express obligation, and are, therefore, two forms of modulation, the former does not involve the speaker while the latter does. Hence, the latter is may be construed as a modality, or quasi-modality as Halliday (1976: 188) calls it.

express his inability to do something rather than his unwillingness to do it. The use of ‘I can’t’ allows the speaker to avoid commitment by referring to ‘a certain something’ that is preventing from doing the action in question. The hearer is led to understand not that it is the speaker who is unwilling to do the act, but that he is made unable to do it. The following utterances illustrate the use of modal verbs in non-committal utterances:

(147) *nəqdər nəhtæʒha.*
I may need it.

(148) *jəmkən nqərʕu rəmdan lli ʒaj.*
I may quit smoking next Ramadan.

(149) *jəqdər rəbbi jəʒʕəlha zawʒa sʕa:liha.*
The Lord can make of her a good wife for you.

Brown and Levinson’s (1987) remark that the use of modality is closely associated with the concept of politeness is pertinent to our study. According to these scholars, the pragmatic meaning of modal verbs either mitigates the illocutionary force of a speech act through positive and negative politeness or aggravates it using the same resources. In our case, as the data above shows, the speaker’s intentional selective use of modal verbs serves as a commitment avoidance strategy and is aimed, in most cases, at mitigating the illocutionary force of the speech acts made (i.e. usually acts of refusing to comply with S’s directives).

In utterances (147) - (149), commitment is avoided by virtue of the fact that the speaker leaves the hearer with an either-or answer; a two-way possibility. Each one of these utterances begins with a subject pronoun followed by the deontic modal ‘can’ or ‘may’ to indicate that it is probable that S will do the requested act. Clearly, the use of a modal verb in response to requests that H is unwilling to comply with is motivated by politeness. We need to note that though refusing to comply with a request is face-threatening to both H and S, avoiding commitment also counts as a face-threatening act to both interlocutors. This is so because by

avoiding commitment, the request is not refused, but it is still not granted either. It appears It appears however that the respondents consider a commitment avoidance utterance to be less face-threatening and to H's face. The use of modality as a commitment avoidance strategy had 12 occurrences out of 707 on the DCT (1,69%).

3.2.14 Strategy 14: Using FTAs

All the commitment-avoidance strategies outlined so far are face-saving strategies-i.e. saving either the hearer's or the speaker's face or both. Strategy 14, however, consists in avoiding commitment through the use of a face threatening act. The utterances below illustrate this strategy:

(150) mælna ɣanhərbu?
Come on! do you fear I'll run away with your money?

(151) mælki ʃla hæd zərba.
Why are you in such a hurry?

(152) ss^ʕæħəb huwwa lli jəsbər ʃla xu:h məʃi lli jəwqəf ʃli:h hakka.
A true friend would not press you as you are pressing me now.

All the three utterances come in the form of a reprimand directed at the hearer. This strategy enables the speaker to avoid responsibility and to preserve his own face while putting the hearer's face at risk. The strategy had 11 occurrences out of 707 on the DCT (1,55%).

3.2.15 Strategy 15: Passivization

(153) lmatʃ məbju:ʃ.
The football match was not honestly won.

(154) t^ʕomobi:l makatʃtæʃ.
A car is not for lending.

(155) ʒu:ʒ hɯwajəʒ makajətsəlfu:ʃ, lmra ʔu tomobi:l.
Two things are not for lending, one's wife and one's car.

The fifteenth strategy, passivization, was used by respondents on nine occasions. Passivization allows the language user, speaker or writer, to leave out the actor, as by definition. The respondents therefore used this strategy both to avoid responsibility for a past action as in utterance (153) or to avoid commitment to a future course of action, as in utterances (154) and (155).

3.2.16 Strategy 16: Using proverbs

Resorting to the use of proverbs as a way of avoiding commitment has also been identified as one of the strategies opted for by some of our respondents. This strategy had 8 occurrences on the DCT (1,13%). Examples of this strategy include the following:

(156) *zwæʒ qisma w nasʕi:b.*
Mariage is a matter of fate.

(157) *zwæʒ li:la tædbi:ru ʕæm.*
A one-night wedding takes a year's preparation.

(158) *la zərba ʕla sʕla:h.*
Haste makes waste.

(159) *ssətra məzjana.*
Marriage is good.

In the given context, the choice of a proverb effectively serves the speaker's intended purpose, that is avoiding commitment, because the proverb which the speaker uses is not his own statement, but is an expression of 'wisdom' and, additionally, a conventional formula that expresses common sense which the speaker knows the hearer cannot challenge or argue against.

3.2.17 Strategy 17: Tempting the requester

To avoid admitting responsibility for a promise that has not been kept, the speaker may resort to tempting the hearer into accepting to wait longer, or even for an unspecified period of time. Respondents to the DCT have used this strategy in the following fashion:

(160) xasna wəqt ktər bæf ndi:r li:k ji ʕrrasija madʕajra:ʃ, ʕla nti sahla ʕəndi wlla?

You deserve to have a wedding that has no like; that's why we need more time. Don't you know how precious you are to me?

(161) ʕanfri li:k ʕsən mən dəkfji ili ʕla bələk.

I'll buy you something better than what you have in mind.

Through this strategy, the hearer is made to believe that the speaker has not failed his commitment, but that his desire to please the hearer is in fact the reason behind the delay. This strategy had a total of seven occurrences on the DCT (0,99%).

3.2.18 Strategy 18: Referring to task difficulty

Referring to the difficulty of the failed task is among the commitment avoidance strategies that have been used by the respondents. The DCT provides two reproach situations in which the addressee/respondent is blamed for his/her failure- i.e. failure at an exam in one situation and defeat at a football game in another. Referring to the difficulty of the task instead of assuming one's responsibility for failure has been used by the respondents seven times out of 707- that is with a rate of 0,99%. The following utterances illustrate the strategy at hand:

(162) ʒæni læmtihæn sʕi:b.

I found the exam difficult.

(163) zzwæʒ mæʒi səhəl.

Marriage isn't easy.

3.2.19 Strategy 19 : Expressing a Personal Attitude

(164) ξ adatan, makansəlləf ttomobi:l djæli.
I don't usually lend my car to people.

(165) makandxul f hadji djæl zwaʒ.
I don't meddle with matters of marriage.

In strategy nineteen, the speaker avoids giving the hearer a straightforward refusal of his/her request, and chooses instead to point out to the general way in which s/he habitually behaves in similar request situations. The speaker indicates that, as a rule, s/he does not comply with the kind of request the H has made. By expressing his/her general attitude toward H's requestive act, the speaker avoids directly indicating to H his/her unwillingness to fulfill the request. Expressing personal attitude as a commitment avoidance strategy has occurred on the DCT on six occasions (0,84%).

3.2.20 Strategy 20: Showing Surprise

(166) rani mafhəmt walu.
I don't understand anything.

(167) bhali bhalək, yari:b hadji; maʒrəftf ki daru lhad noqatʕ.
Just like you, I find this strange; I don't know where these marks come from.

(168) mafhəmtf ki wqəʕ; waxa xdəmt manʒəhtf.
I don't know what happened; though I worked hard, I did not make it.

(169) matwəqqəʕtʕ həd nati:ʒa.
I did not expect these results.

(170) ana bra:si mafahəm walu.
I, myself, don't understand a thing.

Expressions showing pretence of surprise are the twentieth commitment avoidance strategy and have been used by the respondents with the rate of 0,70 % - that is 5 out of 707

occurrences. The use of this strategy enables the language user to avoid responsibility by distancing himself/herself from his/her negative acts.

3.2.21 Strategy 21: Being vague

Answering with vague, obscure, and ambiguous expressions has also been found to serve the speaker's intent to avoid commitment because it leaves the hearer uncertain as to whether the speaker will perform the act in question, or whether the statement made by the speaker is true. The use of vagueness as a commitment avoidance strategy is evident in the following examples:

(171) dəkʃi lli baɣi:h, rah makajəŋʃ.
You will not find what you're looking for.

(172) ɦtta ndi:r, w nrəd lli:k flu:sk.
I'll pay you back when I am better off.

The ambiguity in utterance (171) is due to the use of the pronoun "dəkʃi" (what), which has no clear referent/antecedent. By contrast, the ambiguity in utterance (172) is due to the omission of the object of the transitive verb "do". The hearer is left to decide whether the speaker means to say "ɦtta ndi:r labass" (till I make some money) or "ɦtta ndi:r/nəqdʕi ʃi ʃyul" (till I take care of some business), or whatnot. This strategy has been used by the respondents with a rate of 0,70% (5 occurrences out of a total of 707).

3.2.22 Strategy 22: Giving human attributes to objects

(173) ləqraja dima mʃəkʂa mʃaja.
School is against me.

(174) lkora mabyætʃ ddxol.
The ball refused to enter.

(175) ttobi:s ɦrəgni.
The bus drove past me.

Despite having a small frequency count (3 occurrences out of 707; 0,42%), this strategy is interesting as a means of avoiding commitment. It consists mainly in the speaker ascribing willful actions - normally attributed to humans- to inanimate objects. Though both hearer and speaker are aware that in reality, a ball for example has no will and cannot refuse to do this or that act, the attribution of the human intention of ‘refusing’ to an object is nonetheless linguistically feasible and meaningful. This strategy aids the speaker in distancing himself/herself from the negative act for which s/he is blamed.

3.2.23 Strategy 23: Using first person plural pronoun

(176) lla:h jhdina w safi.
May God show us the right path, that's all.

(177) dərna ktər mən ʒəhdna w maʒæbf lla:h.
We did more than we could.

(178) xəlli lina fwijja djal lwəqt nʒəmʕu fih ʃi baraka.
Give us some time to gather some money.

Avoidance of the deictic pronoun ‘I’ and the use of plural ‘we’ instead has also been identified as a distinct commitment/responsibility avoidance strategy set. This pronominal choice aids the speaker not to foreground his/her personal/involvement in the action. The speaker’s individual intention/action is, in this manner, hidden behind a collective intention/action, which would not have been possible had he used the first person singular pronoun. The use of first person plural pronoun is also a face-saving strategy for the speaker. Tables 32 summarizes the pragmatic moves and syntactic processes employed by the respondents as commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies. These strategies are given by order of predominance- that is, from the most favoured to the least preferred.

Table 34: Commitment/Responsibility Avoidance Strategies

	Options	Frequencies	Percentages
Pragmatic moves	1. Blame shifting	175	24, 75 %
	2. Renewing commitment without specification of the date	115	16, 26 %
	3. Usings fatalistic expressions	69	9, 75 %
	4. Emphasizing past, present, or future effort	45	6, 36 %
	5. Renewing the commitment with specification of the date	29	4, 10 %
	6. Prioritizing personal need	23	3, 25 %
	7. Expressing future hope	22	3, 11%
	8. Reference to luck	22	3, 11 %
	9. Expressing lack or absence of knowledge	20	2, 82 %
	10. Violating the Relation Maxim	15	2, 12 %
	11. Offering unrequested advice	12	1, 69 %
	12. Using face-threatening acts	11	1, 55 %
	13. Using proverbs	8	1, 13 %
	14. Tempting the requester	7	0, 99 %
	15. Referring to task difficulty	7	0, 99 %
	16. Expressing a personal attitude	6	0, 84%
	17. Feining surprise	5	0, 70%
	18. Violating the Manner Maxim	5	0, 70%
	19. Giving human attributes to objects	3	0, 42 %
Syntactic processes	20. Using conditional sentences	85	12, 02 %
	21. Using probability-expressing modals	12	1, 69 %
	22. Passivization	9	1, 27 %
	23. Implicating the hearer (Using the first person plural pronoun.)	2	0, 28 %
Total		707	100%

3.3 Conclusion

The present chapter has been concerned with the presentation, description, and analysis of the data collected through the Discourse Completion Test. The analysis of the DCT has allowed us to identify a total of 23 commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies. In addition to presenting these strategies distinctly and in order of preference, we have also

attempted to explain how each of the identified strategies serves the speaker's purpose of avoiding commitment/responsibility, and thus save his/her face. Finally, each of the identified strategies has been illustrated, using the respondent-formulated utterances given on the DCT.

The next chapter, entitled "Discussion and interpretation of the Findings", outlines the main implications of the findings, and discusses them in relation to the research questions and, where pertinent, in relation to the relevant literature. We show how the present thesis extends current knowledge in the area of linguistic pragmatics, and point out to potential avenues for future research relevant to commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies.

Chapter 4: Thesis Findings: Discussion and Interpretation

4. Thesis Findings: Discussion and Interpretation

4.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion and an interpretation of the research findings both in relation to the research questions and objectives (cf. General Introduction), and in relation to the relevant literature. We outline the main implications of the findings, and point out the way in which the study reinforces, differs from, and extends current knowledge in the area of linguistic pragmatics. The implications of the study have a bearing on different fields of interest, including Second Language Acquisition Research, and speech act and politeness theories.

In terms of organization, this chapter involves four sections: the first section provides a brief summary of the findings, followed by a discussion of the implications of the study for classroom practice, and of the contributions it makes to existing theory. At the end of the chapter, we point out some of the limitations of the study and outline relevant and potential avenues for future research.

4.1 A Brief Summary of the Results

Earlier in this thesis, we defended our view that there is a strong correlation between the concepts of ‘commitment’ and ‘responsibility’, particularly, from a linguistic and a philosophical standpoint. We have shown how both concepts involve the notions of obligation and agency, and how they are semantically related by implication.

Attempting to situate responsibility/commitment avoidance utterances within speech act theory, we have argued that this type of utterances, particularly the commitment-avoiding type, does not form a distinct class of speech acts, but is essentially a special kind of statements which does not share in a typical statement’s potential for falsity and truth, for it is not a report or a description of a pre-existing fact, but rather a statement of a conditioned future intention. Responsibility-avoiding utterances, which are usually given as accusation-

responses, are also underlyingly statements which, however, are verifiable because reference is made to the addressee's retrospective responsibility (i.e. his or her responsibility for a past action).

We have also pointed out that our interest in utterances with a responsibility/commitment-avoiding pragmatic intent stems from our observation that non-obligating and responsibility-avoiding utterances are commoner in language use than straightforward commitment-making speech acts, and have nonetheless been addressed only scarcely by scholars.

The purpose of our study has been mainly to identify the output strategies through which commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances are realized, specifically among native speakers of Moroccan Arabic.

Before proceeding to discussing the implications of the findings outlined in Chapter Three, it would be expedient to revert back to the major research questions addressed by the thesis, as well as briefly outline the main findings.

The research questions the study seeks to answer are formulated thus:

- (1) In speech situations involving face-threats, will speakers of MA tend to choose commitment/responsibility-avoiding utterances or will they, instead, opt for self-committing and responsibility-accepting speech-acts?
- (2) On the assumption that speakers of MA will generally tend to choose commitment/responsibility-avoiding utterances, to what extent is their choice influenced by the social variables of gender, level of education, and age?
- (3) On the assumption that the mentioned social variables do have an incidence on MA speakers' socio-pragmatic behavior, what discourse strategies do these speakers employ in order to avoid

commitment/responsibility?

In the perspective of answering these questions, two data collection instruments have been used, a dual-choice questionnaire and a DCT. Both instruments are role-based procedures which have yielded results that pertain to the respondent's hypothetical behavior.

With respect to the first and second research questions, the findings indicate that:

- (a) The general tendency towards commitment/responsibility avoidance among native speakers of MA is maintained irrespective of the social variable adopted
- (b) Female, older, and less educated respondents tend to be more avoiding of commitment/responsibility than other respondents.
- (c) Where the request and blame situations involve high levels of face-threat, a preference for the commitment-making response provided in option B is observed.
- (d) The respondents show a stringer tendency to avoid commitment/responsibility when the addressee is an intimate.

With respect to the third research question, we have been able to identify a total of 19 pragmatic moves/strategies and 4 syntactic processes. These strategies are presented in Table 32 by order of predominance:

Table 32

	Options	Frequencies	Percentages
Pragmatic moves	1. Blame shifting	175	24, 75 %
	2. Renewing commitment without specification of time	115	16, 26 %
	3. Usings fatalistic expressions	69	9, 75 %
	4. Emphasizing past, present, or future effort	45	6, 36 %
	5. Renewing the commitment with specification of time	29	4, 10 %
	6. Prioritizing personal need	23	3, 25 %
	7. Expressing future hope	22	3, 11%
	8. Reference to luck	22	3, 11 %
	9. Expressing lack or absence of knowledge	20	2, 82 %
	10. Violating the Relation Maxim	15	2, 12 %
	11. Offering unrequested advice	12	1, 69 %
	12. Using face-threatening acts	11	1, 55 %
	13. Using proverbs	8	1, 13 %
	14. Tempting the requester	7	0, 99 %
	15. Referring to task difficulty	7	0, 99 %
	16. Expressing a personal attitude	6	0, 84%
	17. Feining surprise	5	0, 70%
	18. Violating the Manner Maxim	5	0, 70%
	19. Giving human attributes to objects	3	0, 42 %
Syntactic processes	20. Using conditional sentences	85	12, 02 %
	21. Using probability-expressing modals	12	1, 69 %
	22. Passivization	9	1, 27 %
	23. Implicating the hearer (Using the first person plural pronoun.)	2	0, 28 %
Total		707	100%

A number of implications emerge from the findings overviewed above. In the following sections, we point out some practical applications of the study to the field of Second Language Acquisition research and also discuss the implications of the findings to speech act and politeness theories.

4.2 Implications of the Research Findings

4.2.1 Implications of the Findings to SLA Research

Errors are often the result of language transfer; an important concept in SLA research. Where there are differences between the native language and the target language, instances of negative transfer will arise, and where there are similarities between the L1 and the L2, positive transfer will tend to occur, aiding L2 learning (Rod Ellis, 1999). Krashen (1983: 148) defines transfer as "the result of falling back on old knowledge, the L1 rule, when new knowledge ... is lacking. Its cause may simply be having to talk before "ready", before the necessary rule has been acquired.

Ellis (1994: 341) offers a broader definition for the term 'transfer', also referred to in the literature as cross-linguistic influence, describing it as:

a general cover term for a number of different kinds of influence from languages other than the L2. The study of transfer involves the study of errors (negative transfer), facilitation (positive transfer), avoidance of target-language forms, and their over-use.

(Ellis, 1994: 341)

Most of the studies that addressed the phenomenon of L1 negative transfer have focused on problems of interference arising from differences (between two different languages) in grammar, syntax, phonology, and morphology, or from differences in the meanings attributed to non-verbal codes. Other studies have investigated instances of miscommunication arising from variations (among varieties of the same language) in intonation, pause, volume, timbre, pronunciation, and prosody. Research on pragmatic knowledge¹² transfer is rather a relatively recent endeavor.

Our concern in this section is with instances of pragmatic negative transfer¹³ that

12. According to Faerch and Kasper (1984: 214), pragmatic knowledge is "the knowledge of how verbal acts are understood, and performed in accordance to a speaker's intention under contextual and discursal constraints."

13. Pragmatic transfer in interlanguage pragmatics refers to the influence learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 has on their interpretation, production, and learning of L2 pragmatic information (Kasper, 1992: 207)

may occur as a result of second language learners (of relevance to us are native speakers of Moroccan Arabic learning English as a second language) transferring native language (L1) norms and forms of producing a commitment/responsibility avoidance utterance to their L2.

This phenomenon is an empirically observable fact among Moroccan high school students, who tend to make responsibility-avoiding utterances using L1 strategies. This transfer often results in instances of non-native sounding utterances of the kind sketched below. The inappropriateness of the responsibility-avoiding utterances given in exchange (147) reflect deficiencies in NNS pragmalinguistic knowledge¹⁴, which occurs "when speech act strategies are inappropriately transferred from L₁ to L₂", or when "the pragmatic force mapped by S onto a given utterance is systematically different from the force most frequently assigned to it by native speakers of the target language".

(179) A: You're late!

B: The door, teacher (often said by low-level students).

or

B: The door closed on us* (said by more competent students) .

Since Arabic and English are distant languages and, therefore, distant cultures, we expect to find significant differences in the realization of the relevant pragmatic strategies.

For illustration, some contrastive analysis comparing commitment/responsibility-avoidance strategies in Moroccan Arabic to the strategies used in English is needed. Using the input provided by native speakers of Moroccan Arabic to Item (1)¹⁵ in the dual-choice questionnaire, we observe that the utterance most frequently used as a response is:

(180) mʃa ʃlijja tran,

which translates into

(181) the train left me behind.

14. Thomas (1983: 99) distinguishes between pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure, which he attributes to "cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour", including, for example, cross-cultural differences in the assessment of degree of imposition, or of social distance and power.

15. Item (1) requires the respondents to respond to an employer's hypothetical inquiry on the reason for their being late to work.

* "The door closed on us" is a literal translation of the MA "tsəd ʃlina lɓab", which is equivalent to "We were shut out" in English.

Utterance (148) corresponds to the most predominantly used responsibility-avoidance strategy among the respondents: a strategy we labelled earlier as ‘Shifting blame to other entities’ (See Chapter Three). We have noted that this strategy is linguistically realized either through (a) topicalization of the blamed agent/entity without mention of the self, as in

(182) Imagana li: ʔwəlt ʔliha masʔonæʔf
The clock I relied on did not ring

or through (b) self-objectivization:

(183) ħrəgni tʔ ɔ:bi:s
The bus drove past me.

Both substrategies serve the speakers/respondents in portraying themselves as the victim. The frequent resort to the use of these two substrategies by native speakers of MA is evidence that self-victimization is not culturally disapproved, and is largely acceptable in the Moroccan context. Playing the victim card as an escape line and a self-defense mechanism is part of a strongly rooted cultural value in the Moroccan mindset: Determinism. Suggesting a sense of being permanently in the hands of an external agent; that agent being fate in most cases, is an indication of a deterministic view of the world. Individuals who seek to evade responsibility will often exploit this cultural value in their favor through solicitation of sympathy, and emotional appeal (or *pathos* using Aristotle’s rhetoric). Evidence for awareness that this tactic effectively works, or is at least rarely challenged, can be found in popular Moroccan proverbs, such as:

(184) tməskən ħta tməkkən
Play the victim till you achieve your goal.

(185) tabəhla w sri:q lʔwəd
Playing the fool while stealing firewood.

Because determinism is not an essential part of Anglo-Saxon culture, victim playing is not culturally approved of, and is, therefore, rarely if ever used as an avoidance strategy. This

explains why utterance (149); the train left me behind, though an accurate English translation of utterance (148), sounds, I assume, rather anomalous to English native use. A native English speaker, who attempts to provide a face-saving justification for his being late for work, would opt for emphasizing effort as a responsibility avoidance strategy; a different strategy than the one most opted for by native speakers of MA. A native English speaker justifying his/her failure to be on time for the train is expected to say:

(186) I missed the train, (emphasizing the effort made at attempting to catch the train),

rather than

(187) The train left me behind.

To a native speaker of English, nothing precludes free will, not even fate. Therefore, it seems that avoiding responsibility by emphasizing the effort made to achieve a certain goal is consistent with, and is endorsing of, their belief in free will. The appeal is not made to the pathos of the hearer, but rather to their logos.

Due to such differences between Moroccan Arabic and English in the cultural values associated with agency beliefs, and to the resulting differences in language usage, native Moroccans learning English as a second language are likely to apply their L1 preferred responsibility avoidance substrategy, self-objectivization or self-victimization, to their L2 communicative strategies. The topic of L1/L2 strategy interference and pragmatic transfer between Moroccan Arabic and English is in fact worth investigating, and evidence for this phenomenon is easily accessible, as I have observed first-hand, through class observation.

Moroccans learning English as a second language do not seem to be hindered only by cross-linguistic influence that is inherent to L2 learning in general, or by their own socialization patterns, but also by inadequate classroom practices. Unfortunately, contemporary classroom practice in the Moroccan context is largely one of product. The

teaching of pragmatic knowledge does not take account of the intricacies involved in the use of pragmatic strategies and functional language. This claim is supported by a study conducted by the researcher (2010) on the teaching and assessment of communicative functions¹⁶ (See footnote below).

The analysis of several observed classes used as units of description for our observation schedules has shown that lessons aimed at the teaching of speech acts typically involve the learners in extracting a set of formulas or language exponents expressing the target function. This is done based on a listening or reading task, which is usually a stilted conversation or written dialogue, respectively. The study has also concluded that ELT teachers in Morocco equate the learners' ability to use language functions/speech acts with their ability to automatize a set of canned utterances and to randomly use the one or other exponent in response to the social situations presented in the textbook. This random, and often inappropriate use, is at times tolerated and at others corrected simply through a quick reformulation of the appropriate utterance because teachers believe that time constraints and the students' low proficiency level in the target language do not allow for more.

Reporting on the results of the study, the researcher stipulates that:

the data collected through class observation show that the teaching of communicative functions is more grammar-oriented than communication-oriented. Teachers relegate the teaching of communicative functions to a secondary position compared to other language areas as grammar, and the four skills, and tend to place emphasis on the accuracy of the memorized linguistic exponents produced by the students rather than on their appropriateness.

The researcher (2010) also notes, based on the results of the study, that using the textbook's 'contrived' reading passages as a pretext for teaching the target language function instead of presenting the latter in naturally-occurring language, as in a conversation extract,

¹⁶ .The study is entitled "The Teaching and Assessment of Communicative Language Functions in the EFL Classroom: The Moroccan Classroom as a Case Study." This research was conducted in 2010, as part of the academic requirements of the Applied Language Studies and Research in Higher Education Master Program in which we were enrolled.

offered no opportunities for the teacher to refer to the communicative value of the function the students were learning. The textbooks do not promote the development of the students' communicative and pragmatic awareness.

This simplistic way of approaching speech acts seems to be practised in other parts of the world as well. Olshtain and Cohen (1983: 45) opine that in general, "teaching materials dealing with speech acts have for the most part been constructed largely in the absence of empirical studies to draw upon. They have relied on the curriculum writer's intuition and can best be characterized as reflecting a high level of simplicity and generality".

One implication of this is that learners need to be exposed to the target social functions in naturally occurring contexts and in various genres of texts, and that considerations of levels of formality, role relationships, context, setting, cultural appropriateness, and politeness constraints, etc. should be foremost in the language teacher's agenda when teaching speech acts. The devising of textbook material tasks should also be more empirically based, and more communication-oriented than grammar-oriented.

The findings of the study also have a bearing on speech-act and politeness theories. In the following sections, we discuss the contributions of the study to these theories and point out those aspects of theory that our findings confirm.

4.2.2 Theoretical Implications of the Findings

Examining the commitment/responsibility-avoiding strategies outlined earlier in this chapter, I argue, based on, and in confirmation of, Austin's (1962: 101-131) characterization of perlocutionary acts, that commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances are essentially part of *the unintended perlocutionary effect(s)* a speaker produces in a Hearer by making a FTA. The basis for this claim is Austin's (1962: 121) contention that typically, the effect(s) produced by an illocutionary act in the hearer are not determinable by convention.

We noted earlier in Chapter One Austin's (ibid: 120) definition of perlocutionary acts as "the achieving of certain effects by saying something", and his characterization of this type of acts, perlocutions, as being:

not conventional, though conventional acts may be made use of in order to bring off the perlocutionary act. A judge should be able to decide, by hearing what was said, what locutionary and illocutionary acts were performed, but not what perlocutionary acts were achieved .

(Austin, 1962 : 121)

Austin also distinguishes between intended and unintended perlocutionary effects/acts which he dubs as the perlocutionary object, and the perlocutionary sequel respectively.

The verbal response-acts triggered by the face-threatening situations used in our DCT are not the typical or automatic corresponding second parts of a request or an accusation from an interactional standpoint. They do not form part of the habitus internalized for certain kinds of social interaction or situations. To explain our view, we note that:

- (a) The perlocutionary effect intended by a speaker in making a request for information is to incite the hearer to inform the speaker rather than to avoid commitment to the assertion he makes.
- (b) The perlocutionary effect intended by a Speaker in making an accusation is to make the hearer recognize that he acted against the speaker's interest and that the hearer is expected to compensate for the speaker's loss rather than to avoid responsibility.
- (c) While inciting the Hearer to provide the speaker with the piece of information s/he requested is the effect intended by the speaker, the emotive perlocutionary effect created in H by the request, and the resulting non-obligating utterance; the verbal perlocutionary act, corresponds to the unintended effect(s) produced in the hearer through the FTA (the request).

- (d) While bringing the hearer to recognize the speaker's loss, and to attempt to remedy for it, is among the speaker's main intended effect(s), the emotive perlocutionary effect created in the hearer by the accusation, and the resulting responsibility-avoiding utterance; the verbal perlocutionary act, corresponds to the unintended effect(s) produced in Hearer through the FTA (the accusation).
- (e) The unintended effects, of which producing a commitment/responsibility avoidance utterance is part, are unpredictable because they are not initially foreseen by the speaker at the time of utterance.
- (f) The choice of the response-act and its output strategy is unpredictable for it depends not only on H's successful interpretation of S's utterance, but also on other factors, such as H's evaluation of the degree of imposition of the S's act, the relative distance, power, and the speech-situation as a whole.

The non-conventionality of commitment/responsibility avoidance utterance-acts, and of their underlying output strategies, can also be argued for by reference to politeness theory. Before elaborating any further on this idea, we need to establish a clear link between the use of commitment/responsibility-avoidance strategies and politeness. In Chapter One and Three, we suggested that there is a relation between politeness and commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances. In this connection, it is arguable that the making of utterances with a commitment/responsibility-avoiding pragmatic intent is essentially motivated by the need for politeness. I argue that it is mainly out of politeness and face (one's and others' face) considerations that a Speaker may choose to make a commitment/responsibility avoidance utterance in response to an FTA. Accordingly, a speaker who is observant of the politeness maxims conventionally agreed upon in his respective speech community would choose to use in response to, say, a neighbour's request to borrow his/her car:

- (188) *ħna çənd İla:h.*
We act according to God's will. (A commitment-avoidance utterance)

instead of saying:

- (189) *sməħlija walakin mayajmkənf lijja nsəlfək tt^omobi:l*
Sorry, but I cannot lend you the car. (A polite rejection of the request)

There is also a clear link between the use of commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances and face theory. In making a commitment-avoidance utterance, the speaker preserves his/her positive face; the desire to be approved of by others and to maintain such approval. Also, in making a commitment/responsibility avoidance utterance, the Speaker protects negative face; the need for one's actions and freedom not to be impeded by others (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 62).

Reverting back to our idea that commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances, being perlocutionary acts, are not prescribed by convention, and arguing for this by reference to politeness theory, we note an important distinction made by Haugh (2003: 400) between inferred politeness and anticipated politeness. With regard to this distinction, Haugh (ibid: 400) argues that "politeness is anticipated when the behaviour giving rise to politeness is expected, while it is inferred when the behaviour giving rise to politeness is not expected." Haugh's distinction is analogous to Ide's (1989: 230-231) discernment and volitional politeness, and to Lee Wong's (2000; cited in Haugh, 2003: 403) notions of normative and strategic politeness. An instance of normative politeness would be similar to something of the order of:

- (190) May I have a glass of water, please?

uttered by a guest addressing his/her host(ess) in the latter's house. Politeness here is normative because it arises as part of the conventional meaning of U (142). An example of inferred politeness, on the other hand, would be:

- (191) My throat is dry,

which may be interpreted as a request performed by means of an implicature. We may state, therefore, that commitment/responsibility-avoiding speech acts, being part of the perlocutionary effect(s) not intended by the speaker, are associated with the second type of politeness; the inferred kind, where the Hearer has to infer the relevance of what the Speaker said to interpret the S's utterance as an attempt to avoid commitment/responsibility.

The second major implication emerges from the input provided by the respondents to the DCT. An examination of the utterances given by the respondents reveals *scarce attempts at redressive action made by the respondents when avoiding commitment/responsibility* despite the fact that, we maintain, *a commitment avoidance utterance is a FTA* (as we show below). Mention must here be made that this in fact counters what the relevant literature suggests; namely, that face-threatening acts typically involve redressive action, or attendance, to the Hearer's face (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 70).

To clarify our point, we need to examine the kind of face-threatening acts used in the DCT as prompts, and the input provided by the respondents. We mainly used requestive acts to elicit from the respondents commitment-avoiding utterances, and accusations to elicit responsibility-avoiding utterances. Accusations and criticisms are typically oriented to positive face and requests to negative face. Because these acts involve a certain degree of threat, in designing our requests and accusations, we made sure to redress the FTAs directed at the respondents as one would normally do in making a real-life FTA (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 70).

Examining the commitment/responsibility-avoiding utterances elicited through the DCT, we have observed that no attempt at face redress is made in the respondents' input/utterances despite the face-threat involved.

We argue for the validity of our claim that commitment/responsibility avoidance speech acts are FTAs on the following accounts:

- (a) If the point of a non-obligating utterance is to indicate to the hearer that his utterance places him under no obligation to do A, then it is also an indication to the hearer/requester that the speaker is not readily willing, or is at least reluctant, to do A, and, by implication, that his/her request is imposing.
- (b) Indicating to the requester that the requestive act is imposing is a threat to the hearer's/requester's positive face wants; "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 62)
- (c) By implicitly indicating to the hearer that the request is imposing, the speaker/commitment avoider is also at risk of positive face damage.
- (d) If the point of a non-admitting utterance is to distance the speaker from a certain act A despite the hearer/accuser knowing the speaker performed A, then S's non-admitting utterance explicitly contradicts H.
- (e) By contradicting H, the Speaker is intentionally or unintentionally threatening H's positive face.
- (f) By contradicting H, not apologizing for act A, and not indicating to the hearer willingness to remedy for act A, the speaker is also at risk of positive face damage.

Because non-obligating and non-admitting utterances involve ramifications to be borne both by S and H, the commitment/responsibility-avoiding utterances should merit facework attention through redressive action (i.e. "the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face" (See Goffman, (1967:12). Yet, of the total number of utterances gathered through the DCT, the respondents have made attempts at face redress only on four occasions:

(193) ʔaɫ'la:h jkərmək, ʧtʰeni wəqt ktər
May God honor you, give me more time

(194) ʔaɫ'la:h jrdʰi ʧli:k a wəldi l-garu: kulu: darar
May God be pleased with you, son, cigarettes are full of harm

(195) xasna wəqt ktər bæf ndi:r li:k ʃi ʃrrasija madʰajra:ʃ, ʃla nti sahla ʃəndi
wlla?

You deserve to have a wedding that has no like; that's why we need more time. Don't you know how precious you are to me?

(196) sməħlija walakin ʃadatan makansələf tʰomobi:lti.
Sorry, but I don't usually lend my car.

Taking this into account, I argue that lack of redressive action in the respondents' commitment/responsibility-avoiding utterances indicates that native speakers of MA do not *perceive commitment/responsibility-avoidance utterances as face-threatening acts*. For them, avoiding the language of commitment (by unwilling an unambiguous promise, avoiding committing to an assertion, or avoiding responsibility) is more a matter of *minimizing cost to self and of playing safe rather than a potential face-threat*. This implication in turn indicates and supports the fact that *politeness, and evaluations of politeness, remains to a large extent culture specific* (Brown and Levison, 1987: 13). What is considered a face-threat in some cultures may not be so considered in others.

Of special interest it is to note Leech's (1983: 132) claim that the politeness principle (PP) includes what he calls the Generosity Maxim, which consists in the speaker maximizing cost to self and minimizing benefit to self. However, our findings suggest that this does not apply to the Moroccan culture insofar as Commitment/responsibility avoidance is concerned. The lack of redress attempts in the use of non-committals does indeed indicate that minimizing cost to self is perfectly legitimate and culturally accepted in Moroccan culture,

which explains, perhaps, why it is not at all an uncommon speech behavior to avoid commitment/responsibility.

This does not preclude the fact that that commitment/responsibility avoidance speech behavior among native speakers of MA is motivated by politeness for it still observes other politeness maxims, notably, Leech's (ibid.) politeness maxim of *minimizing antipathy*. By not directly turning down a request (in avoiding commitment), and by distancing oneself of an act that is perceived to be harmful to the hearer's interests (in avoiding responsibility), the speaker is in fact attempting *to maximize sympathy and to minimize antipathy*.

The last theoretical implication to be drawn relates to the findings pertaining to research question (2) on the incidence of the social parameters of sex, age, and level of education on the respondents' choices, and to which the answer has been that female, older, and less educated participants are more-avoiding of commitment/responsibility than the remaining groups.

To account for this finding, we need to take a stand vis-à-vis the behavior itself; the commitment/responsibility-avoiding behavior, and here we need to be careful not to fall into the ontological trap of conflating the analysts' and the participants' perspectives. The perspective of the participants is the perspective along which our discussion of the findings will go. It is, therefore, not a pre-defined perspective, but rather an emerging one.

In avoiding commitment/responsibility, the speaker is "*struggling*" to preserve self-interest while "*struggling*" to avoid antipathy. We maintain that managing to achieve both ends, minimizing cost to self and maintaining sympathy, is *diplomatic behavior*. Perhaps, all polite behavior is in fact diplomatic. Brown and Levinson (1987) are of a similar opinion as they (1987: 1) contend that:

... politeness, like formal diplomatic protocol, (for which it must surely be the model), presupposes that potential for aggression as it seeks to disarm it and makes possible communication between potentially aggressive parties.

Taking this stance on commitment/responsibility-avoidance language use, namely, that it is diplomatic, it seems only plausible that female and older respondents be the more diplomatic, and therefore, the more avoiding of commitment/responsibility. It would have been also consistent if more educated respondents were more avoiding of commitment/responsibility than less educated and illiterate respondents. That is not the case however; the higher the level of education, the lower the rate of commitment/responsibility-avoiding responses, and correspondingly, the lower the level of education, the higher the rate of commitment/responsibility-avoiding responses. This, I assert, is not due to an imbalance in the distribution of the sample. On the contrary, the study includes 28 female respondents and 24 male respondents with a university level of education; an evenly stratified population in as far as the level of education is concerned. We believe that this finding means that more educated respondents are less avoiding of commitment/responsibility; of course not because they have no concern for politeness, but because *they perceive and evaluate commitment/responsibility avoidance behavior differently from the other groups: they perceive the behavior negatively*. To the more educated sample of our population, avoiding commitment/responsibility is perceived as a form of deception. They do not want to be perceived as being deceptive.

This implies that evaluations or judgements of what is considered (im)polite behavior is not only subject to cultural specificities (as noted earlier in this section), but also subject to evolution and change. These evaluations are not constant because some aspects of the culture, including language, and perceptions of specific usages of language, may change from one generation to another. The fact that the more educated group in our population sample corresponds to the youngest age-group corroborates our claim as 69% of the total population of university students who participated in the study is aged [15-36].

In my discussion of the implications of the study, I have shown how this thesis corroborates findings in, and contributes to, different fields of scholarship. Perhaps the most prominent *forte* of the study, which I consider a valuable addition to the general theory of speech acts, is our identification of the output strategies employed by native speakers of MA to avoid commitment/responsibility, and the conclusions that this linguistic behavior, and its realization strategies, allows us to draw about some aspects of Moroccan culture. There are, however, a number of limitations to the study, relating principally to some methodological aspects of the research

4.3 Limitations

One major limitation to the study relates to population size and representativeness of the population in terms of geographical profile. Our sample is limited in terms of number and geographical area. A good sample is one that is adequate in magnitude. It would definitely have been more serviceable to our research had we involved more than the 109 respondents we were able to access. Larger population samples typically aid in certifying the reliability of the findings. Of note also is that we limited ourselves to respondents from urban areas. It is likely that the commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies used in rural areas be slightly different from the ones used by city dwellers.

Among other limitations of the study is the type of data collected. Although we have managed to gather an extensive corpus of data from the 109 respondents who participated in the study through an elicitation test and a dual-choice questionnaire, we cannot claim that the elicited data gathered through questionnaires is as valid as the naturalistic data gathered through observation and field notes. There is certainly a difference between what speakers of a language actually say in given situations and what they think they would say in those situations.

There are polarized views concerning the degree of effectiveness of different speech act data collection methods, but the results of research studies that compare naturalistic data with questionnaire data in speech-act research indicate that the results yielded by the ethnographic method as compared to the questionnaire method, and the extensions that can be made based on each are different. One example of such studies is Bodman and Eisenstein's (1988), who compare data gathered through open-ended role plays, Discourse Completion Tests and field notes on naturalistic data (cited in Beebe and Cummings, 1996.: 2). These researchers report that the data yielded by these different methods differs in terms of utterance length and complexity, with data from the DCTs being less complex and including shorter utterances. Dahl (1991: 244) also compares the use of authentic discussions with open-ended role plays. The two data sets differ in terms of amount of talk and directness in the performance of face-threatening acts, with data from authentic discussions being lengthier and less direct.

Naturalistic data allows for gathering more complex, lengthier, and less direct utterances. In our research, we have observed that some commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies that are used in natural encounters have not been used at all by the participants. 'Using humor' as a commitment/responsibility avoidance strategy, for instance, is among the pragmatic moves that do not figure in our list of commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies due to its relative complexity. An example of this strategy is provided in exchange (197) below

(197) A: ?i:mta yatrad lija flu:ssi?

B: ?ana ra ʒaj ntəssələf mən çəndk çawtani u nta kathdər çla lflu:ss luwla!

(laughter)

Relying on field note-taking as a major source of data would perhaps have aided us in gathering more reliable and complex data, and in preserving the psycho-social dynamics of

the recorded exchanges and interactions. We were aware of the advantages of the ethnographic method before embarking on the task of data collection, and we have as a result used this data collection method at the outset, but we soon realized that it is impractical to engage in full-time observation, waiting for the fortuitous occurrence of the target language act. We turned to using a DCT instead, for it makes for a sizable amount of data which may perhaps be lacking in complexity, but which certainly is not inauthentic. The DCT we have administered was designed in such a way as to elicit model responses which are likely to, and which do indeed, occur in spontaneous speech.

Perhaps another methodological setback in the research relates to the sampling technique we have used to gather the data. We have employed stratified sampling because we expected the measurement of interest (the tendency to use commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances) to vary between the different subgroups of our population sample, stratified by sex, educational level, and age. We aimed at ensuring even or nearly-even representation of the different subgroups to avoid the issues that typically arise with unequal sample sizes. One example of such issues is the potential risk of confounding the effect of one variable with another. If, for instance, the male sample in our population has a much larger percentage of educated respondents than the female group, we may not be able to determine with clear-cut certainty whether the male respondents are less avoiding of commitment due to their gender or due to their educational level.

We have managed to secure an equally gender-stratified population, but a comparatively less balanced sample insofar as the level of education and age variables are concerned. Unlike student pools, older and less educated respondents are generally not an easily accessible source of research subjects. In our case, imbalance in sample size is caused by both the accessibility problem and the low return rates among the older and less educated respondents.

Considering the purposes of our study, the relative imbalance in sample size observed for some of the social variables taken into account in the classification and analysis of the data does not constitute a problem; first, because identifying the output strategies for avoiding commitment/responsibility does not require stratification of the population; and second, because no variations in responses have been observed among the respondents from the different sex, age group, and level of education categories. The analysis of the responses given by the different population strata indicates that the general tendency among the respondents is to avoid commitment/responsibility regardless of the social variable adopted.

4. 4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed and interpreted the research findings, linking, where applicable, the outcomes of the study to the research questions and the relevant literature. A number of implications have been outlined; some are relevant to SLA research and others to speech act and politeness theories. We have also shown that our research has achieved its objectives and has provided reliable and fact-based answers to the research questions we posed in the General Introduction.

5. General Conclusion

Carried out within the framework of Speech-Act Theory, this study has aimed to describe and account for what may be considered in the light of current pragmatic research both as an interesting and intricate pattern of language usage. The phenomenon in question has to do with a type of pragmatic strategies used pervasively by native speakers of Moroccan Arabic, and which we have dubbed "commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies".

This phenomenon has been investigated within the theoretical framework provided by the works of such philosophers of language as Austin (1962), Searle (1965, 1969, 1975b, 1979, 1985), Grice (1975, 1989), and Brown and Levinson (1987).

The present study takes its source data primarily from the use of situated conversational prompts. To gather the relevant data, we have relied on informants' responses to systematic elicitation procedures, namely, a dual-choice questionnaire and a Discourse Completion Test. The situational prompts used on the DCT have made it possible for us to have a controlled verbal interaction between a (hypothetical) speaker and the respondent. This kind of dyadic verbal interaction has also enabled us to capture the respondent-formulated commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances at their full range.

One of the major aims of this thesis has been to determine whether native speakers of MA speakers tend to produce commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances, or, on the contrary, perform straightforward commitment-making speech acts, in response to speech situations involving face-threat. This tendency/trend has been defined in terms of the respondents' choice of the target utterance, a commitment/responsibility avoidance response, or a commitment-making speech act. The findings seem to lend evidence to the researcher's initial assumption that native speakers of MA tend to avoid commitment and/or responsibility in responding to FTAs.

The results have also shown a clear correlation between the gender, level of education,

and age variables as female, less educated, and older respondents tend to be more avoiding of commitment/responsibility than their male, educated, and younger counterparts.

We have seen that, for example, female responses to situations 7, 8, 9, and 10 constitute, respectively, 86%, 84%, 81%, and 100% of the total number of respondents who have opted for target utterance A, whereas male responses to the same situations constitute, respectively, 78%, 76%, 61%, and 94% of the total number of respondents who have opted for the same option.

Illiterate respondents have shown a similar pattern of responses (e.g. 100% of illiterate respondents against 60% of students with a university level of education have chosen responsibility-avoiding option A in responding to Situation (2)). Likewise, respondents aged above 65 have shown more inclination toward commitment/responsibility avoidance. In response to Situation (2), for example, 89% of these respondents against 55% of respondents aged [15-25], the youngest age-group in our sample, have opted for target utterance A.

We have, however, observed that the tendency to avoid commitment/responsibility is relatively weak when the degree of imposition on S's negative face is strong. This finding seems to suggest that the desire not to be impeded on in one's actions and to be free from imposition is more important to the respondents than their need to protect their own and their interlocutor's positive face.

Another finding worthy of note is that the need for face saving seems to be more pressing to the respondents when the addressee is an intimate than when s/he is not. Request Situations (9) and (10) prove this finding to be valid (See page 133 above). These two request situations, which not only are in many respects similar, but which also involve the same level of face-threat, have yielded different results, particularly by respondents aged above 65. This age group has chosen option A with the rates of 44% in response to Situation (9) and the rate of 89% in response to Situation (10). The only variable that appears to account for the

observed difference in the given rates is the parameter of social distance: In situation (9), the respondents are addressed by a friend whilst in (10), they are addressed by an offspring.

Our observation that the respondents show more inclination toward the indirect response provided in option A, where the addressee is an intimate, counters Leech's (1983: 127) claim that social distance and indirectness are parallel dimensions. It is, however, in keeping with Brown and Levinson's (1987) work. The two authors (*ibid.*: 76) argue that the values that speakers attach to the parameters of social distance, power, and ranking of imposition in computing the weightiness of an act is to a large degree culturally defined. They (*ibid.*: 13) explain that while the notions of face and politeness are universal, they are prone to much cultural variation. The basic face-wants of self-approval and freedom from imposition constitute in their view:

(...) the barebones of a notion of face which [they argue] is universal, but which in any particular society [they] would expect to be the subject of much cultural elaboration (...) what kind of acts threaten face, **what sorts of persons have special rights to face-protection** [emphasis mine], and what kinds of personal style (...) are especially appreciated.

Brown and Levinson (1987: 13)

Of special relevance it is to note that the responses given by the informants not only correlate with the variable of social distance, but also, as was pointed out earlier in this section, with the context of use (i.e. more specifically, with the respondents' assessment of the weightiness of the request or blame situation). This last factor seems to have a stronger effect on the respondents' answers than the sex, level of education, and age variables.

This, in our view, suggests an important area for further research on commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies. A pertinent and interesting post-doctoral research study would be one that examines the existence of a correlation between the respondents' choice of a commitment/responsibility avoidance utterance (the indirect and presumably more polite option), or of a commitment-making speech act (the stronger and more direct statement), and the degree of face-threat involved in the prompting FTAs -i.e. that

is, the degree to which the suggested request and blame situations are considered to interfere with the addressees' wants of approval and self-determination (positive and negative face wants respectively).

Another major aim of this thesis has been to identify the strategies or pragmatic resources by means of which native speakers of MA attempt to avoid commitment/responsibility. In this regard, we have identified a total of 19 pragmatic moves and 4 syntactic strategies. The most prominent of these strategies include a) shifting blame to other entities (subsuming topicalization and self-objectivization as substrategies), b) renewing commitment without specification of time, c) passivization, d) using fatalistic expressions, e) emphasizing past, present, or future effort), and (f) prioritizing personal need.

We have noted that the respondents' frequent use of 'self-objectivization' as a responsibility-avoidance strategy indicates that self-victimization is culturally acceptable in the Moroccan cultural context. Portraying oneself as being subordinate to, and a victim of, fate, circumstances, society, or bad luck is a self-defense mechanism that serves the speaker's purpose of avoiding both responsibility and commitment.

Examining the large corpora of respondent-formulated utterances gathered through the DCT, we have observed that the less commitment is involved in an utterance, the more polite is its realization (See Chapter 3: Data Processing and Analysis). This finding is evident from the fact that respondents do not use any redressive strategies when the time of the renewed commitment is specified (e.g. "lla:h jkərmək, ɕtʰeni wəqt ktər" (May God honor you, give me more time), whereas they do when the commitment is renewed without specification of time (e.g. "ɣədda nʒi:b lək flu:sk" (Tomorrow, I'll bring you your money).

A number of implications that are relevant to speech act and politeness theories have been directly derived from our study. In this respect, we have been able to establish a clear link between politeness and the use of commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies. We

have also found out that a speaker's use of commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies is part of the unintended perlocutionary effects created by a requestive act or an accusation, and is, therefore, an example of inferred politeness. We have also shown that commitment/responsibility avoidance utterances is a special kind of statements and are typically face-threatening acts (See Chapter 4 above).

We have justifiably qualified this linguistic and social behavior as being highly complex and diplomatic as it engages the speaker in an attempt to preserve self-interest while avoiding antipathy. We have relevantly stated that this behavior is driven by two seemingly culturally valued politeness strategies in the Moroccan context; namely, *minimizing cost to self and maximizing sympathy*. Key aspects of theory that the study confirms are (a) that politeness and evaluations of politeness are culture-specific, (b) that politeness and perceptions of politeness are subject to evolution and change, and (c) that language transfer concerns pragmatic transfer as much as it does other kinds of language transfer.

Finally, based on a comparative analysis of the preferred commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies among native speakers of Moroccan Arabic and their English counterpart (See Chapter 4 (Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings) above), we have argued that the differences observed between these two languages in pragmatic strategy use are in fact rooted in divergences in the culture, and in the value and belief systems of the two respective speech communities, particularly in what regards agency beliefs.

The fact that MA language users make appeal to the hearer's sympathy by depicting themselves as the victim of others' actions or of fate is compatible with the culture's deterministic and fatalistic worldview. Conversely, English culture, generally placing more emphasis on individualism and free will, provides native speakers of English with face management strategies other than self-victimizing strategies.

Another interesting avenue for further research would be to investigate the

differential use of the pragmatic resources of a language by speakers of different languages in different situations. We may, for example, conduct a cross-linguistic investigation of commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies contrasting MA data with data elicited from native speakers of French and English. Investigating parallels in language usage in different speech communities may reveal significant differences or similarities in strategy use, and, by implication, in the way these communities perceive politeness, face wants, social relationships, and in how they manage FTAs.

Some of the implications of the study are relevant to SLA research. We have argued that in teaching and learning language functions, awareness of certain linguistic and cultural nuances is requisite given the apparent potential for cross linguistic influence of L1 pragmatic strategies on L2 processes. Accordingly, it is our belief that there is a need for educators to approach the teaching of speech acts in a more communication-oriented than grammar-oriented way, focusing more on appropriateness than on accuracy. In the same vent, we also believe that textbook designers should use authentic materials which are articulated to the cultural and socio-pragmatic intricacies built-in the language.

By studying the pragmatic resources/strategies by means of which speakers' intentions to avoid commitment/responsibility are expressed, we have been able to show how these intentions have built-in social implications and social valence, and how commitment/responsibility avoidance speech phenomena derive from certain assumptions about face and politeness.

Throughout the thesis, we have been discussing the phenomenon of commitment/responsibility avoidance in speech from the standpoint of the speaker/respondent as 'polite' behaviour. This, because one of the classical roles incumbent on the social researcher in general is to describe the social and linguistic/pragmatic phenomena in as objective a manner as possible.

We believe, however, that while it is important for the researcher to be able to take a detached stand from the observed phenomena, though s/he may be an in-group member sharing the culture of the observed, it is equally important for him/her to be able to understand, point out to, and criticize the biases underlying that culture.

The fact that commitment/responsibility avoidance in interaction is a pervasive phenomenon in MA language use means that this avoidance behavior is viewed by the respondents, and, by extension, by other members of the Moroccan society, as appropriate conduct. In fact, the tendency to avoid commitment/responsibility reflects an entire society's assumptions not only about what constitutes 'good' behaviour, but also about their concept of 'self', of 'the other', and of social relationships in general.

Attempting to avoid commitment in response to a request by, for example, committing oneself to doing A without specifying the time¹⁷ while the speaker has no *a priori* intention to comply with the request, shows that sincerity and truth do not take precedence over the MA speaker's want for immediate face-saving and for preserving self-interest. Likewise, denying one's involvement in an act and blaming it on other factors (in the case of responsibility avoidance), or giving false hopes to the requester (in the case of commitment avoidance) is a blatant breach of the Quality Maxim. It reflects a tacit agreement shared by a society's members to fool, and to lie to, one another for mere convenience.

It does not matter to the speaker that the addressee will eventually realize that his/her request will not be gratified mainly because S knows that H cannot in any way be certain that S was insincere expressing his/her intention to look into the request. Intentions are internal

17. Strategy (2) "Renewing the Commitment without Setting a Fixed Date" has been ranked second by order of predominance; it has been used 115 out of 707 times- that is with a rate of 16,26%

mental content. The speaker is only interested in protecting personal property and preserves, and in protecting positive face at the moment of interaction. The fact that H is given false hope and is given to understand that s/he may wait until some other time, which at times is not even specified, indicates that the commitment avoider is only focused on maximizing benefit to self at the expense of the other's hopes, time, and natural right to truth and sincerity.

In connection with the idea of sincerity, Grice (1989: 29) suggests that "it is much easier (...) to tell the truth than to invent lies" in the sense that it is more rational to humans to tell the truth than to lie. To avoid commitment/responsibility by inventing lies is accordingly a departure not only from moral behaviour, but also from rational behaviour.

We, as Moroccans, have learned to avoid commitment/responsibility in childhood. It would require a great deal of effort to depart from this habit. The danger with this habit lies in the fact that the use of commitment/responsibility avoidance strategies has worked its way down into the linguistic munitiae of everyday life, and up to the most elaborate political speeches, thus creating mistrust, resentment, and reciprocal doubts in both S and H about the other's concealed, unspoken motives and intentions.

Lying to H in order to preserve one's face is, in our view, a form of ill-relationship management, a sign of indifference to 'the other', and a reflection of S's belief in the supremacy of his/her needs and interests over those of 'the other'. It is ill-management of social relationships because it is based on make-belief and pretence. It would be an understatement to say that the quality of social relations which are built on such bases are unhealthy.

In fact, some responsibility avoidance strategies are shown to be used in daily social encounters and interaction even when there is no real need for their use. Typically, a MA speaker would say "tʰa:h lija lkæs" ("the glass has fallen), "thærræs" (it broke), and "dʰa:ʃu lija sswarət" (the keys were lost) instead of saying "tʰæjjəht lkæs" (I dropped the glass),

"hrrəsstu" (I broke it), and "djjəſt sswarət" (I lost the keys), perhaps at times without him/her being aware that these are acts of responsibility avoidance.

Though the act of avoiding commitment/responsibility in real-time interaction, and apparently also in responding to the questionnaires we administered, seems unconscious, we believe that the respondents would be able to identify option B, in which S tells the truth, as the more morally viable response if asked to do so. It seems that, in our everyday linguistic interaction, we, as Moroccans, think and speak more in terms of cost and benefit than in terms of right and wrong; which, unfortunately, reflects negatively on our collective face.

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Appendices

"Commitment/Responsibility Avoidance Strategies in Moroccan Arabic Language Use"

Appendix (A):

Questionnaire (1): The Dual-Choice Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed for the purpose of collecting some relevant information for my doctoral thesis on the following topic: "Commitment/Responsibility Avoidance Strategies in Moroccan Arabic Language Use".

By reacting to situations (1) - (10) below in the way indicated in the instructions, you will contribute to the completion of the present work. This questionnaire respects the anonymity of the respondents. Please, do not write your name. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Instruction 1: Please specify your:

1. Gender: Male female
2. Age: _____
3. Nationality: _____
4. Occupation: _____
5. Education level: Primary Secondary university none
6. Place of birth:

Instruction 2: Please indicate what you think you will say in response to the situations provided below by circling the response option corresponding to your answer. If none of the options corresponds to your answer, please, feel free to write your own response in the blank space provided.

Situation 1:

1. Suppose you arrived late at work one day. Your boss called you and said to you: "Your arriving late to work is unacceptable. Why were you late?" What would your answer be? Is it (A) or (B)?

- (A)- The train left me behind
- (B)- I overslept.

If you have an answer other than the ones suggested to you, add them in this blank:

Situation 2:

2. You are the coach of a football team. Your team has played and lost the game in your city. One journalist asked you: "Why did you lose the match? The audience was not expecting this score." What would you rather answer?

- (A)-We were unlucky.
- (B)- We were not up to it.

If you have an answer other than other the answers suggested on you, add them in this the blank:

Situation 3:

3. Your neighbour asked you to lend him your car so that he may run some errands with it. He told you: "I have some errand to run in Tangiers this weekend and I need your car. Can you lend it to me?" Of the two responses suggested, which one would you rather choose?

- (A)- We'll see about it when the time comes.
- (B)- Sorry, I do not lend my car.

If you have an answer other than the ones suggested to you, add them in this blank:

Situation 4:

4. You have a female neighbor whose reputation is not good. One day, a man came to you and said: " If God wills, I intend to marry your neighbor. What do you advise me?" In a situation such as this one, what would you answer? :

- (A)- God knows best, Sir.
- (B)- That girl is not good for marriage.

If you have an answer other than the answers suggested to you, add them in this blank:

Situation 5:

5. Exam results have been posted, and you found out that you failed. Your father asked you: "So? What's the news? Were the results good or are they the same as last year's?" What would you answer?

- (A)- The teachers hate me. They gave me a failing mark. I don't know why.
- (B)- I did not make it this year.

If you have an answer other than the ones suggested to you, add them in this blank:

Situation 6:

6. You arrived late for the exam. Your teacher asks you: "Why are you late?" Choose one of these options for a reply:

- (A)- The bus left me behind
- (B)- I missed the bus

If you have an answer other than the answers suggested to you, add them in this blank:

Situation 7:

7. It has been a while since you have been engaged to a girl/boy. Over time, you started doubting whether this person is the right life partner for you and felt you need more time before you make a final decision. One day, this person asks you: "When shall we get married?" What would you answer?

(A)- When God wills it.

(B)-I still need time to think.

If you have an answer other than the answers suggested to you, add them in this blank:

Situation 8:

8. You are addicted to cigarette smoking. One day, your son says to you: "when are you planning to quit smoking? It is not good for your health". What would you answer your son?:

(A)- I will try to give it up, son.

(B)-By the beginning of next year, I will have given it up.

If you have an answer other than the ones suggested to you, add them in this blank:

Situation 9:

9. You borrowed a sum of money from a friend of yours and you cannot give him back his money yet. One day, he comes to you and says: " you took very long. When will you give me back my money?" In a situation such as this one, which of the two options given below would you choose to answer with?

(A)-Soon, God willing.

(B) Sorry, but I am penniless/broke.

If you have an answer other than the answers suggested to you, add them in this blank:

Situation 10:

10. You promised your son to buy him a PC if he passed his exams. He passed his exams and you happened not to have money to buy him the promised computer. Your son came and asked you: "Dad, when are you going to buy me the computer you promised?" What would you answer in this situation?

(A)- You will have your PC, God willing.

(B)- We can't afford it.

If you have an answer other than the ones suggested to you, add them in this blank:

Appendix (B):

Questionnaire (2): The Discourse Completion Task

This questionnaire is designed for the purpose of collecting some relevant information for my doctoral thesis on the following topic: "Commitment/Responsibility Avoidance Strategies in Moroccan Arabic Language Use".

By reacting to situations (1) - (10) below in the way indicated in the instructions, you will contribute to the completion of the present work. This questionnaire respects the anonymity of the respondents. Please, do not write your name. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Instruction 1: Please specify your:

1. Gender: Male female
2. Age: _____
3. Nationality: _____
4. Occupation: _____
5. Education level: Primary Secondary university none
6. Place of birth:

Instruction 2: Please react to the situations below by indicating what you would say had you been involved in these situations in real-life.

Situation 1:

1. Suppose you arrived late at work one day. Your boss called you and said to you: "Your arriving late to work is unacceptable. Why were you late?" What would your answer be?

Situation 2:

2. You are the coach of a football team. Your team has played and lost the game in your city. One journalist asked you: "Why did you lose the match? The audience was not expecting this score." What would you answer?

Situation 3:

3. Your neighbour asked you to lend him your car so that he may run some errands with it. He told you: "I have some errand to run in Tangiers this weekend and I need your car. Can you lend it to me?" What would you respond?

Situation 4:

4. You have a female neighbor whose reputation is not good. One day, a man came to you and said: "If God wills, I intend to marry your neighbor. What do you advise me?" In a situation such as this one, what would you answer? :

Situation 5:

5. Exam results have been posted, and you found out that you failed. Your father asked you: "So? What's the news? Were the results good or are they the same as last year's?" What would you answer?

Situation 6:

6. You arrived late for the exam. Your teacher asks you: "Why are you late?" What would your answer be?

Situation 7:

7. It has been a while since you have been engaged to a girl/boy. Over time, you started doubting whether this person is the right life partner for you and felt you need more time before you make a final decision. One day, this person asks you: "When shall we get married?" What would you answer?

Situation 8:

8. You are addicted to cigarette smoking. One day, your son says to you: "when are you planning to quit smoking? It is not good for your health". What would you answer your son?:

Situation 9:

9. You borrowed a sum of money from a friend of yours and you cannot give him back his money yet. One day, he comes to you and says: " You took very long. When will you give me back my money?" In a situation such as this one, what would you say?

Situation 10:

10. You promised your son to buy him a PC if he passed his exams. He passed his exams and you happened not to have money to buy him the promised computer. Your son came and asked you: "Dad, when are you going to buy me the computer you promised?" What would you answer in this situation?

Appendix (c):

The Moroccan Arabic version of the dual-choice questionnaire

ana Xeddama ɣla waħəd al-baħt baj nəsrif kifaf kajɣawbu lmɣarba ʔda tħəttu f baɣd
lmawaqif. ʔda ɣmmərti həd lʔistimara u tbbəsti tawɣihətt lli mktuba ltəħt, ɣadi tkun
ɣawəntini bezzəf f həd lbaħt. Maɣadiɣ nəktəb smitk, u lʔaɣwiba lli ɣadi tɣtəni, maɣadi
jɣrəf hum ħtta waħəd. u sukran bzaf ɣla ttaɣawun djalk.

I. f həd lfaraɣətt, ħddəd lina:

1. lɣins djalk: dakar / ʔunθa
2. lɣinsijja djalk: _____
3. lɣmər djalk : _____
4. lɣədma: _____
5. lmustawa ddirasi djalk, waf: ɣamiɣi θanawi ʔiɣdadi maqariɣ
6. lblaɣa fi: n tzaditi: _____

II. hadu mɣmuɣa djal lmawaqif li mumkin jwəqɣu lʔaj waħəd fina. ftarəd ʔanak tħəttəti
fiɣlan f had lmawaqif, jnu ɣadi jkun lɣawab djalk f kul ħala?

1. ftarəd ʔanak wsəlti mɣəttəl ləlxədma ji nhar. za ɣəndək lmudi:r djalək
u galli:k: “həd tətəal djalək rah ma maqbbulɣ! ɣləɣ t- ɣəttəti?” jnu mumkin
jku:n lɣawa:b djalk? Waf (⊕) ʔaw (⊖) :

(⊕)- mɣa ɣlijja ttran
(⊖)-səraħa, səbəht nəɣəs

ʔi:da ɣəndək ji ɣawəb ʔaxur mən yi:r lʔaɣwiba lmuqtaraħa ɣli:k, dɣefha
fhəd lfaraɣy :

2. nta/nti mudərri:b(a) djal fari:q djal kurat lqadam. lə**ʃ**bæt lfərqa djalək u xəsərtu lmætʃ fmədi:ntkum. Səwlək wəhd sʰahafi: "**ʃ**læf xəsərtu lma:tʃ? lʒumhu:r makænʃ mətʷəqə**ʃ** hæd nnatiza. ʃnu ɣatfəddʰəl dʒawəb?

(!)- məssə**ʃ**əfnæf lhədʰ.

(↔)- ma kənnæf fəl mustawa.

ʔi:da **ʃ**əndək ʃi ʒawəb ʔaxur mən ɣi:r lʔaʒwiba lmuqtaraħa **ʃ**li:k, dʰefha fhæd lfaræɣ :

3. lʒa:r djalək tʰləb mənnek tsəlfu ttʰomobil bæf jəqdʰi bi:ha ʃi ɣaradʰ. gallik: "ra **ʃ**əndi ʃi ɣaradʰ fʰanʒa hæd lwi:kand u məhtæʒ f tomobi:ltək . wæf mumkin tsəlləfha lijja?" mən hæd lʒawabajn lmuqtaraħajn, ʃnu təxta:r?

(!)- mən hna ldi:k lwəqt jhi:n lla:h.

(↔)- sməhlija, makansəlləfʃ tomobilti

ʔi:da **ʃ**əndək ʃi ʒawəb ʔaxur mən ɣi:r lʔaʒwiba lmuqtaraħa **ʃ**li:k, dʰefha fhæd lfaræɣ : _____

4. nta **ʃ**əndək wəhəd lʒa: ra katəsmə u katʃu:f **ʃ**li:ha ʃi ħwajəʒ maməʒjaninʃ.

wəhəd nha: r, ʒa wəhəd raʒəl u galli:k: "ʔi:n ʃæ? l'la:h, ana nawi nətzuwəʒ ʒarətkum. **ʃ**əfæk bæf tənəsʰəhni?" fməwqi:f fhæl hada, ʃnu ɣa tʒawəb?

(!) lla:hu ʔa**ʃ**lam, ʔa sidi.

(↔)- di:k lbənt matəsʰla:ħʃ lzwaʒ.

ʔi:da **ʃ**əndək ʃi ʒawəb ʔaxur mən ɣi:r lʔaʒwiba lmuqtaraħa **ʃ**li:k, dʰefha fhæd lfaræɣ : _____

5. xærʒu nnataʔiʒ djal lmtiħanæt. lqiti rasøk sʻa:qætʻ. suwløk lʔab djaløk:
"ʔamədʻra? nnataʔi:ʒ huma haduk wla fhāl lʒæm lli fæt?" ʒnu ɣa tʒawəb?

(!)- lʔasatida kulhum ma- kajhəmluni:ʃ. səqtoni, maʒrəftʃ ʒlæʃ.

(↵)- manʒəħtʃ hæd lʒæm

ʔi:da ʒænd -ək ʃi ʒawəb ʔaxur mən ɣi:r l- ʔaʒwiba lmuqtaraħa ʒli:k, dʻef ha
fhæd lfaræɣ :

6. Wsəlti mʒətʻəl ləl mtiħæn. suwløk lʔustæd: "ʒlæʃ wsʻlti mʒətʻəl?" xta:r wahəd mən hæd
lʒawəbajñ:

(!)- hrəb ʒlijja ttʻobi:s

(↵)- zgəlt ttʻobis

ʔi:da ʒændək ʃi ʒawəb ʔaxur mən ɣi:r lʔaʒwiba lmuqtaraħa ʒli:k, dʻef ha fhæd
lfaræɣ :

7. Mu:dda hadi w nta/nti məxtʻu:b lwaħəd lbənt/wəld. mʒa lwəqt wəlliti ʃækk(a)
ʔanna hæd ʃaxəsʻ huwwa ʃʃari:k ləmunəsib ləlħjatək w ħəssiti annak
məħtæz wəqt ktər baʃ taxud qarar. wəħəd nha:r, suwløk hæd ʃaxəsʻ: "ʔimta
ɣadi nətzəwʒu?" ʒnu ɣa tʒawəb?

(!)- nha: r lli jəbyi lla:h.

(↵)- mazæl məħtæʒ wəqt nfəkkər.

ʔi:da ʒændək ʃi ʒawəb ʔaxur mən ɣi:r lʔaʒwiba lmuqtaraħa ʒli:k, dʻef ha
fhæd lfaræɣ :

8. nta mudmin ſla ttadxi:n. wæhd nha:r suwlæk wældæk w gal li:k: "Baba, ʔimta yadi tæqtæſ lgarru? ra:h mamæzjænf." bæf ya tʒawæb?:

(á)- ya n- hawæl n- qætʰæſ -u ʔa wældi

(ɔ)- mſa ʒónvøje djæl l -ſæm ʒ -ʒʒaj

ʔi:da ſænd -æk ʒi ʒawæb ʔaxur mæn yi:r l- ʔaʒwiba l-muqtaraħa ſli:k, dʰefha fhæd lfaræy :

9. tsællæfti wahæd læflu:s mæn ſænd wæhæd sʰæhbæk u maſændæk ʒ bæf træd li:h flu:su. ʒa ſændæk sʰæhbæk u wqæf ſli:k ʒu galli:k: "ra:k tſætʰælti ſli:ja. ʔimta ya træd li:ja flu:ssi? ʒnu mumkin tʒawæb fmawqif fhæd hada?"

(á)- qri:b, ʔin ʒæʔə lla:h

(ɔ)- smæhlija, walakin ma ſændi:ʒ bæf nræd hum li:k

ʔi:da ſændæk ʒi ʒawæb ʔaxur mæn yi:r lʔaʒwiba lmuqtaraħa ſli:k, dʰef ha fhæd lfaræy :

10. waſædti wældæk annak ya tæfri li:h PC mi:n ʒnʒəħ. nʒəħ hæd lwæld u nta/nti ma ſændæk ʒ lflu:s bæf tʒri li:h hæd l- PC w galli:k: "Baba, ʔimta ya tʒri li:ja l- PC lli gælti i?" ʒnu ya tʒawæb fhæd lhala?"

(á)- ʒə -ku:n xer, ʔin ʒæʔə lla:h.

(ɔ)- ma- kajən flu:s daba ʔa wældi

ʔi:da ſændæk ʒi ʒawæb ʔaxur mæn yi:r lʔaʒwiba lmuqtaraħa ſli:k, dʰef hahæd lfaræy :

2. nta/nti mudərri:b(a) djal fari:q djal kurat lqadam. lə**ʃ**bæt lfərqa djalək u xəsərtu lmætʃ fmədi:ntkum. Səwlək wəhd sʰahafi: "**ʃ**læf xəsərtu lma:tʃ? lʒumhu:r makænf mətʷəqə**ʃ** hæd nnatiza. ʃnu dʒawəb f mawqif fhal hada?

3. lʒa:r djalək tʰləb mənnək tsəlfu ttʰomobil bæf jəqdʰi bi:ha ʃi ʒaradʰ. gallik: "ra **ʃ**əndi ʃi ʒaradʰ ftʰanʒa hæd lwi:kand u məhtæʒ f tomobi:ltək . wəf mumkin tsəlləfha lijja?" ʃnu dʒawəb f mawqif fhal hada?

4. nta **ʃ**əndək wəhəd lʒa: ra katəsmə u katʃu:f **ʃ**li:ha ʃi h̄wajəʒ maməʒjaninf. wəhəd nha: r, ʒa wəhəd raʒəl u galli:k: "ʒi:n ʃæ? lʰla:h, ana nawi nətzuwəʒ ʒarətkum. **ʃ**æfæk bæf tənəsʰəhni?" fməwqi:f fhæl hada, ʃnu mumkin dʒawəb?

5. xərʒu nnataʒiʒ djal lmtihanæt. lqiti rasək sʰa:qətʰ . suwlək lʒab djalək: "ʒamədʰra? nnataʒi:ʒ huma haduk wla fhal l**ʃ**æm lli fæt?" ʃnu ʒa tʒawəb?

6. Wsəlti m**ʃ**ətʰəl ləl mtihæn. suwlək lʒustəd: "ʃlæf wsʰəlti m**ʃ**ətʰəl?" ʃnu dʒawəb?

7. Mu:dda hadi w nta/nti mæxt^u:b lwaḥəd lbənt/wəld. mḥa lwəqt wəlliti ḡækk(a) ḡanna həd ḡaxəs^s huwwa ḡḡari:k ləmunəsib ləlḡjatək w ḡəssiti annak məḡtəz wəqt ktər baḡ taxud qarar. wəḡəd nha:r, suwlək həd ḡaxəs^s : "ḡimta yadi nətzwəḡu?" ḡnu mumkin dḡawəb fmawqif həd hada ?

8. nta mudmin ḡla ttadxi:n. wəḡd nha:r suwlək wəldək w gal li:k: "Baba, ḡimta yadi təqtəḡ lgarru? ra:h maməzjənf." bəḡ ya dḡawəb(i)?:

9. tsəlləfti wəḡəd ləflu:s mən ḡənd wəḡəd s^səḡbək u maḡəndək ḡ bəḡ trəd li:h flu:su . ḡa ḡəndək s^səḡbək u wqəf ḡli:k ḡu galli:k: "ra:k tḡət^səlti ḡlijja. ḡimta ya trəd lijja flu:ssi? ḡnu mumkin dḡawəb fmawqif ḡḡəl hada?

10. waḡədti wəldək annak ya təḡri li:h PC mi:n ḡnḡəḡ. nḡəḡ həd lwəld u nta/nti ma ḡəndəkḡ lflu:s bəḡ tḡri li:h həd l- PC w galli:k : "Baba, ḡimta ya tḡri lijja l- PC lli gəlti i?" ḡnu ya dḡawəb ḡḡəd ḡḡala?
