# Turkish instructors' beliefs and EFL learners' realization of speech act of requests: A descriptive case study

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## ABSTRACT

Although learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) receive language education according to the principles of the communicative approach, they lack pragmatics knowledge. As one of the main issues of pragmatics, speech act of requests has been investigated in the current study. More specifically, EFL instructors' beliefs about teaching requests have been examined as well as learners' realization of speech act of requests. The study was conducted with 20 students and six instructors at an English preparatory program of a state university in Türkiye. Students' data were collected through a Discourse Completion Task while instructors were interviewed. The results suggest that Turkish EFL learners commonly use conventionally direct strategies for making requests and their requests do not show pragma-linguistic diversity. Furthermore, the rank of imposition and social distance seems to be disregarded while making requests. Also based on the interviews with EFL instructors, it was found that they do not have adequate knowledge of teaching pragmatics, and thus, their classroom practices in speech acts of requests are limited. Therefore, this study implies the importance of teaching pragmatics to students at English preparatory programs and the need for enhancing instructors' knowledge of teaching pragmatics.

## Introduction

With the emergence of communicative competence models (see Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972), different aspects of language teaching and learning were highlighted. Knowing a language was previously thought to know grammatical forms, but the emerged competence models implied that knowing a language was not only about being a master of grammar but also about being a language user who can perform language functionally and socially in appropriate contexts. However, half a century of understanding of what constitutes communicative competence seems to remain mainly in theory as teaching pragmatics is often taken for granted in language classrooms, and as stated by Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003), it has not been a traditional part of language curricula since they are regarded as secret rules of the language. Even though classrooms offer plenty of language input, equipping learners with pragmatics knowledge might be a problematic issue for several reasons. The main

reason lies behind the nature of pragmatics since certain functions of language (apologizing, refusals, complaints, etc.) tend to occur at an individual level, which leaves no room for students to observe some functions of the target language. Another reason concerns language instruction due to the nuances of language features. Since the appropriateness of language use depends on context, awareness-raising on how and when the particular structure of language is used and the relation between speakers are necessary for language classrooms. As well as these main reasons, Sykes (2013) mentions eight challenges for teaching pragmatics, limitations of theoretical knowledge while designing curricula, a small amount of authentic input in materials, teachers' knowledge and competence, immerse attention to micro-features of language, time constraints, student-related reasons like individual differences and variety of dialects, which needs to be addressed.

The current study investigates teaching pragmatics within the scope of speech acts, and specifically, it will focus on the speech act of requests. The theory of speech acts goes back to the 1960s when J.L. Austin published How to Do Things with Words. According to Austin (1962), when people utter something, they do not do it for the sake of describing, rather utterances make them achieve communicative goals. Additionally, Yule (1996) states that when people utter something, they have an intention and a force behind their words, which might influence the hearers' behaviors. The relevant literature examines speech acts in three categories: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary acts refer to the utterances performed through the correct use of vocabulary and grammar, illocutionary acts refer to the intention and force behind the utterance, and perlocutionary acts refer to the effect that the utterance has on the interlocutor. Among these three categories, illocutionary acts are associated with speech acts more when pragmatics are framed into second language instruction. Searle (1975) identified five types of illocutionary forces: declarative, assertive, expressive, directive, and commissive forces. Speech act of requests is categorized under directive forces since the directive force of an utterance refers to the speaker's intention to get the interlocutor to do something, and the utterance with a directive force is shaped based on the context and the power relations between speakers. It is stated in the literature that there are a variety of strategies employed by speakers to perform speech act of requests. Table 1 below displays the request strategies proposed by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) as the result of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) that was created in reference to eight languages and varieties.

Table 1. *Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) Classification of Request Strategies (p. 202)*

| Directness | Strategy Types | Tokens |
|---|---|---|
| Direct | Mood derivable | Leave me alone |
| | Explicit performative | I am asking you not to park the car here |
| | Hedged performative | I would like you to give your lecture a week earlier |
| | Locution derivable | Madam, you'll have to move your car |
| | Scope stating | I really wish you'd stop bothering me |
| Conventionally indirect | Suggestory formula | How about cleaning up? |
| | Query preparatory | Could you clear up the kitchen, please? |
| Non-conventionally indirect | Strong hint | You've left this kitchen in a right mess |
| | Mild hint | I'm a nun (in response to the persistent boy) |

Since this joint project gave rise to a growing body of studies adopting this classification while analyzing data, the present study will use this classification while discussing the findings obtained from EFL students at the preparatory level to contribute to the findings of previous studies for a better understanding of the issue in different contexts.

The current study mainly aims to understand English teachers' beliefs regarding their teaching of speech act of requests in language classrooms. To present the issue from different perspectives, the data have been collected from both students and teachers. The data regarding students' realization of requests were collected to have an overview of students' socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic abilities while teachers' data aim to constitute the main part of the study by probing teachers' beliefs regarding teaching pragmatics, specifically teaching speech act of requests. However, the relevant literature mainly focuses on students' realization of requests by adopting cross-cultural analysis whereas very few studies have empirically investigated pragmatic instruction on speech acts of requests until now. Deveci and Hmida (2017) investigated the use of request strategies of Arab students of English and native speakers of English in emails by using a discourse completion task (DCT hereafter) and pointed out that the two groups significantly differed in terms of discourse structures, strategy type and modifiers used. In the second step of the study, pragmatic instruction was given to one group of Arab students and it was revealed that pragmatic instruction led students to go over their emails again. Similarly, Danielewicz-Betz (2013) pointed out the effectiveness of formal instruction in email writing in academic contexts, as academic emails generally include requests, by highlighting the teachability of e-mail pragmatics. Furthermore, Martinez-Flor's (2012) study indicated that pragmatic instruction on requests could sustain its positive effects even over four months as the result of three distributed tests throughout the study. Another study administering pre-test and post-test design belongs to Masouleh et al. (2014). The study aimed to improve students' awareness of the use of speech act of requests by using role-plays, discussions, and group tasks. The tasks and materials were pragmatically oriented. DCT was used to measure the effectiveness of the pragmatic instruction, and it was revealed that the experimental group significantly differed from the control group. Therefore, the aforementioned studies imply the effectiveness of pragmatic instruction on requests, which should be taken into consideration in language classrooms since requesting is a type of speech act that is frequently used in the daily, professional and academic life of learners. Unfortunately, pragmatic instruction is often blurred in language classrooms.

The vague nature of pragmatic instruction in language classrooms brings about contextual and empirical gaps in the literature. Even though requests strategies used by Turkish EFL learners have been investigated so far (see Burgucu-Tazegül et al., 2016; Güneş & Ortaçtepe, 2019; Kılıçkaya, 2010), no research has aimed to investigate Turkish EFL teachers' beliefs regarding teaching the speech act of request. Therefore, the present study aims to fill this empirical and contextual gap by adopting a descriptive case study design and intends to answer the following questions.

1.     Which request strategy types are used by Turkish EFL learners at the preparatory level?
2.     What are EFL instructors' beliefs concerning their students' use of speech act of request and their pragmatic instruction on requests?

# Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive case study design that aims to describe which request strategies are used by Turkish EFL learners studying at the prep school of a state university in given situations varying in rank of imposition, power, and distance, and what Turkish EFL instructors believe regarding students' use of requests and their pragmatic instruction in language classrooms. Based on the aim of the study, the rationale behind adopting a case study design is that the particular context of the study and the phenomenon in question provide clear boundaries and enable the researcher to do an empirical inquiry in depth (Yin, 1984).

## Research Setting

The study takes place at a preparatory department of a state university in one of the metropolitan cities of Türkiye. The preparatory school offers students four terms in a year, and each term aims at covering one level specified by CEFR (A2, B1, B1+, and B2). The curriculum of the school is shaped by CEFR objectives for each level, and a coursebook series aligned with CEFR is used at all levels. Each level focuses on four skills and all skills are evaluated with assignments and exams online due to Covid-19. Unlike the first three levels, the B2 level, which is the expected level of participants in this study, is slightly different in that the level instructs students academically and includes more assignments than the other levels. B2 level consists of seven weeks and students take 14 hours of synchronous lessons on Microsoft Teams and 12 hours of asynchronous lessons on the school's learning management system (LMS). For seven weeks, students are responsible for three core assignments: a graph/chart description report, advantage, and disadvantage essay, and an online debate on a given topic. Additionally, six assignments on the school's LMS forum are compulsory, these assignments include three multimodal assignments, which require students to watch videos and answer related questions, four weekly writing assignments, which require students to write a graph description report, a process description writing, an opinion essay, and a discussion essay, and five weekly speaking assignments, which requires them to send voice-records on various subjects. Finally, in the end of the course, students have to send a voice record about their reflection on B2 levels and have to take the reading, vocabulary, listening, and speaking exams.

## Participants

Twenty students and six instructors took part in the present study. Convenience sampling was used in the selection of the participants. As this type of sampling is based on the availability of the participants, willingness and motivation in participation are expected (Mackey & Gass, 2005). At the beginning of the 2020-2021 fall term, students took a placement test administered by the university, and according to the results of the exam, they were placed into A2-level classes. When the data were collected in the spring term of the year, students were studying at B2 level classes. Throughout the whole academic year, students received both synchronous and asynchronous language instruction due to the outbreak of Covid-19. The instructor-participants (three males and three females) of the study work at the same preparatory department where

students' data were collected. Two of the instructors hold a Ph.D. degree, one of them in ELT and the other is in ELL, and others hold a master's degree in ELT.

## Instruments

The data have been collected by using two different data collection tools to describe the issue in question from different perspectives. The first instrument is a discourse completion task (DCT) that was originally used by Nugroho (2019). As Nugroho (2019) used the original version to collect data from lecturers, the present study used the adapted version of the same DCT by Nugroho and Rekha (2020) who used the DCT on EFL learners. The instrument includes 12 items employing different situational variables: distance, rank of imposition, and power. Since the original study does not display situation-based social variables, except for social power, and the interpretation of situations bases on one's heritage culture, the researcher proposes the following distribution of the situational variables for the DCT in use for Turkish EFL learners. The labels of the variables were adopted from Brown and Levinson's (1987) study on sociological variables in face-threatening acts. The suggested distribution was revised with the help of an expert in ELT.

Table 2. *The distribution of the situational variables in the DCT*

| Situation | Social Power | Social Distance | Rank of Imposition |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | S = H* | Unacquainted | Very significant |
| 2 | S = H | Unacquainted | Somewhat significant |
| 3 | S < H | Well acquainted | Very significant |
| 4 | S > H | Unacquainted | Not significant |
| 5 | S = H | Unacquainted | Somewhat significant |
| 6 | S = H | Well acquainted | Not significant |
| 7 | S > H | Unacquainted | Not significant |
| 8 | S < H | Somewhat acquainted | Somewhat significant |
| 9 | S = H | Somewhat acquainted | Somewhat significant |
| 10 | S < H | Somewhat acquainted | Very significant |
| 11 | S = H / S > H | Unacquainted | Not significant |
| 12 | S = H | Somewhat acquainted | Very significant |

*S = H refers to the equal social power between the speaker and the hearer.

As the second data collection tool, semi-structured interviews were held with instructor-participants, and the interviews were conducted in the instructors' first language, Turkish so that more comprehensive data can be collected. The following questions were used as prompts to collect data:

1. Have you received any in-service and pre-service training on teaching pragmatics before?

2. Do you believe that teaching "making requests" is an important subject in your language course? Why?

3. How do you teach "making requests" in your language classrooms?

4. Do you believe that your students use appropriate requests in English? Have you observed anything during the lesson, in their emails, or assignments?

Procedure

In the first phase of the data collection, the DCT questionnaire (See Appendix) was created by using an online form and sent to the students through Microsoft Teams. Participation was voluntary, and students were not asked to fill in their names on the form. Students were given a week to complete the questionnaire, and twenty students completed the questionnaire within a week. After the analysis of student data, the interview questions were formulated. As the researcher believed that semi-structured would benefit the nature of this descriptive study, the first set of questions was prepared by considering students' DTC findings. During the interviews, related questions about instructors' beliefs regarding the teaching speech act of request emerged. The interviews with each instructor took between 20-30 minutes.

Data Analysis

The data that was collected through DCT on the speech act of request were exported to an Excel file, and students' responses in given situations were analyzed according to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) Classification of Request Strategies. Deductive coding was applied to the raw data. Request strategies were coded, and accordingly directness of strategies was revealed. After the coding, the qualitative data coming from DCT were quantified to display frequencies and percentages. The interview data were also stored in an Excel file after being transcribed non-verbatim. Thematic content analysis was conducted according to the steps proposed by Anderson (2007); relevant descriptions were highlighted, meaningful units were separated, and put together in piles, and labels were assigned to represent the whole data in each pile.

**Findings**

EFL Learners' Realization of Speech Act of Requests

The qualitative data quantified from DCT have shown that conventionally indirect requests are frequently used by Turkish EFL learners. The total number of requests can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3. *Turkish EFL students' directness of requests in DCT*

| Directness of Requests | Frequency (*f*) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Conventionally indirect | 198 | 86.8 |
| Direct | 19 | 8.3 |
| Non-conventionally indirect | 11 | 4.8 |

Regardless of the situation varying in the rank of imposition, power, and distance, learners use "could, can, would you mind, do you mind if..." structures while making requests. Conventionally indirect requests are followed by direct requests and non-conventionally indirect requests. However, they constitute a small part of the percentage. Apart from examining the directness of requests, directness strategies have been investigated. Table 4 below displays the number of strategies that were used in each situation.

Table 4. *Turkish EFL students' use of directness strategies in DCT*

| | Direct | | Conventionally indirect | Non-conventionally indirect | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mood derivable | Explicit Performative | Query preparatory | Strong hint | Mild hint |
| Situation 1 | 1 | 2 | 16 | 1 | - |
| Situation 2 | 1 | - | 18 | 1 | - |
| Situation 3 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 1 |
| Situation 4 | - | - | 18 | 1 | - |
| Situation 5 | 1 | - | 19 | - | - |
| Situation 6 | 3 | 1 | 16 | 1 | - |
| Situation 7 | - | - | 20 | - | - |
| Situation 8 | - | - | 20 | - | - |
| Situation 9 | 1 | - | 17 | - | - |
| Situation 10 | - | 1 | 9 | 2 | - |
| Situation 11 | - | - | 19 | - | - |
| Situation 12 | - | - | 19 | - | - |

As understood by the table, query preparatory (reference to preparatory conditions) strategies were preferred by the learners in all situations. When direct strategies were used, only mood derivable and explicit performative strategies were preferred. For non-conventionally indirect strategies, strong hints were written more than mild hints. Finally, Situation 1 and Situation 6 seem to slightly differ from others in terms of the strategy use. When situational variables are examined for this difference, both of the situations require EFL learners to make requests to well-acquainted people. Therefore, it is assumed that the different results from social distance. Additionally, the length of learners' responses was analysed. Situations 1, 3, 10, and 12 elicited longer sentences from learners to make requests. Even though these situations vary in power and social distance, the common point seems to be the large rank of imposition. In four of these situations, learners' requests are either significant or difficult such as asking the neighbour to lend a car or asking permission from the teacher to attend a family wedding. However, it is important to note that the rank of imposition can be culture-specific. While reporting the findings, Turkish EFL learners' cultural background is taken into account, and the findings should be evaluated in this regard.

## EFL Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching Speech Act of Requests

The interview data show that all instructors recognized the importance of teaching speech act of requests by asserting that the speech act is used in everyday life very frequently, and also a lot of contexts in real life require students to make requests such as talking with teachers at school, professional life, asking for help, talking to strangers, etc. Therefore, instructors believe that the speech act of request should receive attention in EFL classrooms. However, when instructors were asked whether they had received any in-service or pre-service training in teaching pragmatics. Only one instructor who is a Ph.D. candidate stated that they took a related course in the past while other instructors stated to have no previous training in teaching pragmatics except for the linguistics courses they had as an undergraduate or graduate student.

For teaching speech acts of requests, each instructor seems to have a different teaching approach. Some of the instructors mentioned the easiness of integrating them into lessons: "I don't believe that I should give an extra effort to teach speech acts of requests. I model the structures in my speech, and I think this is the best way to teach them" (Instructor 1), or "Not

specific to teaching requests, for teaching any speech acts I use videos and show how people use them in real life. The Internet has everything now and the best thing about these videos is that they model real life. This is what our students need" (Instructor 4). Other instructors mentioned certain techniques that they made use of in their classrooms: "I think the best activity to teach any speech acts is to make students do role-playing. I always do it and I believe it works. If we do not push students to practice their knowledge of pragmatics, how can we expect them to use them in real life? Sorry, but we can't" (Instructor 2), or "I used to work at a language course, and I was teaching ESP there. Students were memorizing pragmatic features of language and then doing dialog completions with what they memorized, surprising but this worked there. Maybe because they needed to use them at work. But here, it is difficult because students do not use them in real life, they just see and use the language during the lessons" (Instructor 3). Finally, some of the instructors talked about their explicit instruction on speech acts of requests, "I give my students a table indicating the formality of requests, for example, when you request something from your friend, you can use "can", but asking something from your teacher, you can use Do you mind...? May...?" (Instructor 5), and "I talked about formality often when I teach speech acts of requests. When there is a dialog, I explain why speakers use certain structures, but I don't use any other materials but for the coursebook. I know that role-plays can be effective, but based on my experiences, our students do not like role-playing, and it makes sense because they reckon it is fake" (Instructor 6). In sum, while some of the instructors encourage students to practice speech act of requests, others prefer making the meaning and use salient by explaining to students. Of six instructors, only one instructor believes that no extra time is needed to teach such functions of language since they are already included in lessons and students can learn them subconsciously.

As well as their practices, teachers stated some challenges of teaching requests and pragmatics in general. They asserted that their main challenges in teaching speech act of requests are time constraints, absence of opportunities to use language, and lack of knowledge and assessment. The following quotations exemplify these challenges, "I know that most of my colleagues do not like teaching pragmatics. I was the coordinator at my department and the feedback forms about the coursebook revealed that instructors wanted us to take out those parts of the coursebooks. That's why, I think that instructors trouble teaching pragmatics" (Instructor 1), "Even if we teach them, I don't think we test them. Students do not like studying things that are not involved in the assessment. Also, there are many ways to request something, but all we hear is "Teacher, Can I...?", because they use only that structure during the lessons. They should be exposed to authentic language to use them more" (Instructor 2), and "I guess we don't have enough time to teach such aspects of language specifically. The syllabus is dense and full of assignments" (Instructor 3).

Finally, when instructors were asked their beliefs about students' realization of speech act, two of the instructors stated that their students could use them appropriately most of the time while others stated the opposite. Additionally, one of the instructors mentioned requests in written genres: "They can't use them appropriately. For example, e-mail writing is generally problematic. We teach them how to write an e-mail in one of the units, but I think we should provide instruction more" (Instructor 1). Another instructor believed that students' inappropriate use of speech acts might be resulting from teachers' instruction: "Now I am

thinking that maybe we as teachers do not know exactly how to use them appropriately because no one of us is a native speaker" (Instructor 2). Therefore, it can be concluded that most of the instructors attributed students' inappropriate use of requests to instruction-related factors and they admitted that students need more instruction about speech acts and pragmatics in EFL classrooms.

### Discussion

The findings have suggested that even though they have a high level of proficiency, students' realization of the speech act of requests in DCT does not show variations in terms of directness and directness strategies. The most frequently used conventionally direct (query preparatory) strategy also does not show any diversity in terms of pragma-linguistic use. EFL learners overuse "Can...?" and "Could...?" while making requests in situationally different contexts. "Would you mind...?", "Do you mind if...?" and "May I" were written in DCT, however, they were not used as much as the former requests. Unlike Güneş and Ortaçtepe's (2019) study, our findings show more diversity, however, the expected quantity is insufficient. Concerning the reasons behind students' preferences of certain realization of speech acts of request, instructors' beliefs can explain students' data. Seeing that pragmatics does not receive much attention and instructors stated to teach formality of requests most of the time, the findings are expected. It is, therefore, seen that EFL learners are relatively better at understanding the situational variable of social power. Yet still, the same issue seems problematic while the rank of imposition and social distance are examined. Therefore, regardless of situational variables, learners perform the same pragma-linguistic structures. Taguchi (2011) claims that there is a relationship between pragmatic development and students' social experiences. For this reason, based on the interviews and DCT data, the current study might suggest that students' non-diverse use might result from pragmatic instruction in EFL classrooms. The findings have also proposed that some situations received longer responses by Turkish EFL learners. When situations are examined in terms of situational variables, these situations seem to hold a high rank of imposition. Brown and Levinson (1987) state that requests are likely to threaten the face of hearers; therefore, speakers can use semantic mitigations and explanatory sentences. Even though students' data were not examined in terms of politeness strategies, students' use of apologies, hedges, and extra explanations, being mostly indirect can suggest that negative politeness strategies were adopted by EFL learners while making requests for challenging situations. Leech (1983) supports this finding by claiming that indirect strategies give the hearers a choice for rejection. Additionally, the role of the heritage culture can be the reason for longer responses. As stated by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), cultures determine the use of request strategies; while some people request more directly, others express a request less directly. In Turkish culture, people tend to be polite in communication especially when they communicate with people having higher social distance. In the literature, similar studies share the same results claiming the effects of culture on request strategies (see Fukushima, 1996; Nugroho & Rekha, 2020; Le Pair, 1996).

With the beginning of the communicative era in ELT, one of the main goals of teachers is to equip learners with communicative competence. As an aspect of communicative competence, pragmatic competence is of the greatest importance. However, Ortaçtepe (2012)

states that EFL learners have difficulties in acquiring pragmatic competence due to a lack of linguistic and cultural knowledge. Therefore, as well as collecting data from students, instructors' beliefs about teaching speech act of requests have been investigated to be able to make challenges in an EFL context. Instructors' interviews help the researcher explain learners' overuse of certain pragma-linguistic uses and discover their beliefs about their practices of teaching requests. Rose (1997) claimed that even though the importance of teaching pragmatics has been recognized, salient theories about the issue are scarce and non-native teachers do not have the advantages that native teachers have in this regard. The result of this present study suggests that instructors lack training in teaching pragmatics, and it might be the source of challenges. According to Rose (1997), teacher education programs should raise teachers' awareness of pragmatics in general. Regarding speech acts, it is one of the core issues in pragmatics. Therefore, a teacher education program should make trainees analyse the speech act in their first language by using the CCSARP coding themes of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) and when they are familiar with the theory, materials involving authentic language use can be offered for the second analysis. Today, thanks to technology, the authentic materials that involve authentic language use are ample. Such an analysis cycle can be adapted for any issues in teaching pragmatics to raise the awareness of teachers. Additionally, teaching pragmatics should be an obligatory course in ELT curricula. By sparing more time and effort to the issue in both pre-service and in-service teacher training programs, the quality of pragmatic instruction can be promoted, and most of the challenges can be handled because the lack of theoretical knowledge seems to be the source of practical challenges. It is believed that the awareness of practitioners can help them go over the way they approach the teaching materials, approaches, techniques, assessment, and curricula. As it is seen, another issue about teaching speech acts of requests is that practitioners do not allocate time for teaching speech acts or pragmatics explicitly. There might be two reasons; practitioners might believe that explicit instruction does not work for pragmatics or they might have never received a pragmatic instruction, and so they do not feel the necessity of it. Today, we know that how non-native teachers learn a language constitutes their belief of how language can be learned. Therefore, reflective practices and action research are highly suggested in this regard. To highlight, the role of explicit teaching in pragmatics, the related literature suggests a myriad of research that proposes the superiority of explicit pragmatic instruction to implicit instruction (see Eslami-Rasekh et al., 2004; Ghaedrahmat et al., 2016; Taguchi et al., 2015) and Chalak and Abbasi (2015) conclude that combination of both can contribute to EFL students' language learning. Finally, as in teacher education programs, consciousness-raising, noticing, and observation tasks for learning pragmatics have been found effective for students (Kasper, 1997) and such tasks do not improve students' knowledge, but also can improve students' performance with the help of formal instruction (Ishihara, 2011).

## Conclusions

The findings of the study have shown that EFL learners have a certain degree of pragma-linguistic use while making requests in situations that differ in terms of social power, distance, and rank of imposition. "Can" and "Could" are frequently used by the learners while "May", "Do you mind if", and "Would" you mind are rarely preferred. Based on the frequency of the

use of these structures, the study suggests that Turkish EFL learners mostly use conventionally direct strategies while making requests. Whereas they can recognize the formality aspects of requests in relation to social power, social distance, and rank of imposition seem to make no difference for learners. Therefore, we can conclude that Turkish EFL learners' use of requests does not show diversity in terms of socio-pragmatics and pragma-linguistics. Besides, the findings obtained from EFL instructors support the students' data to a great extent. Although instructors recognized the importance of teaching speech acts of requests and their students' appropriate use of requests, they stated that they did not receive training about teaching pragmatics or speech acts in the classroom by adding that they know no more than pragmatics in linguistics. Following challenges seem to concern a lack of theoretical and practical knowledge of pragmatic instruction. For example, instructors mentioned time constraints, assessment issues, and exposing students to authentic language use. However, with a certain level of awareness, the challenges can be solvable, and opportunities can be created with the help of the Internet for offering students authentic input, even if it would not be the same case for ESL learners. Finally, about students' overuse of conventionally direct strategies, two reasons might concern the issue. Firstly, some of the teachers stated that while they are teaching requests, they generally show students' a table of formality to make the input more concrete. Secondly, EFL students' heritage culture can have an impact on choosing such strategies. Indeed, this research is not without limitations. As this study aimed to describe a particular context for a specific research topic, the case study design was adapted and data from both students and instructors were collected. Future research can conduct an in-depth analysis of instructors' beliefs about teaching speech act of requests in EFL classrooms. Moreover, future research can also adopt more instruments while collecting data about students' realization of the speech act of request such as role-play activities as well as DCT. This study fell short in this regard because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Last but not least, this research implies that EFL teachers need more training in in-service and pre-service teacher education programs about pragmatic instruction, and more lesson hours should be allocated to teaching pragmatics in language programs for learners, seeing that EFL learners have difficulties in making diverse requests.

## Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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# Appendix

## *Speech Acts of Requests: Discourse Completion Task (DCT) Questionnaire*

| | |
|---|---|
| S1 | You are working on a homework which should be submitted tomorrow. It's about 9 p.m. A new neighbor about your age whom you do not already know is playing music very loudly. So you are disturbed because you cannot concentrate on your homework. You want him to turn down the volume of his music. What will you say? …………………………………………………………………………………………………. |
| S2 | When you are reading a book at library, you suddenly realize that you forget to bring a pen. You need it to write some notes. Sitting next to you, a person about your age whom you do not already know. You want to borrow a pen from him. What will you say to borrow a pen from him? ……………………………………………………………………………………………… |
| S3 | You are very interested in joining a competition held by an overseas university, but you guess that your parents do not permit you to go. However, you want to try to ask your parents' permission to allow you join the competition. What will you say to your parents to grant you permission? ……………………………………………………………………………………………… |
| S4 | You are in a mall to have a shopping. While walking along the dress showroom, you find a lot of nice T shirts with marked "30% discount". You want to buy one, but you get difficulty in finding the suitable size. A young (younger than you) shop assistant is approaching you. It is a good chance for you to ask the assistant to find the one that is suitable for you. What will you say to ask the shop assistant to do this favor? ………………………………………………………………………………………….. |
| S5 | A friend of yours from out of town is visiting you. You are showing your friend around the campus and both of you would like to take a photo together to keep memory of this happy moment. So you want to ask nearby student whom you do not already know to do this favor. What will you say to get this student to take your picture? …………………………………………………………………………………………… |
| S6 | When you are joining a class, you realize that you have left your textbook at home. Your close friend sitting next to you has the textbook. You want your friend to share his textbook with you. What will you say to him? ……………………………………………………………………………………………........... |
| S7 | You are having dinner at a restaurant. You want a waiter to give some more water. What will you say to the waiter? …………………………………………………………………………………………….. |
| S8 | 1. You are wandering around the city, and you are lost. You see a man, whom you recognize that he is your father's friend, so you think you will ask him for the directions. What will you say to him to ask for direction? …………………………………………………………………………………………….. |
| S9 | 2. You are preparing an upcoming final project and finding that one part of the project is really difficult for you. A fellow friend seems to understand the part much better than you. So you need to ask him to help you. What will you say to get your friend to help you? …………………………………………………………….... |
| S10 | 3. You find that the schedule of your class is the same day with your brother's wedding. You prefer to attend the wedding which is an unforgettable moment of your family. Thus, you want to ask permission to your lecturer to not to come to the class. What will you say to your lecturer? ……………………………………………………………………………………………… |
| S11 | You just arrive in a big city in which you do not recognize the place well. You want to see a person whose address in the city written on a name card with you. Accidentally, you see a teenager walking on the path then you want to ask the teenager to tell you how get to the place. What will you say to ask the teenager to give you direction? …………………………………………………………………………………………….. |
| S12 | You want to visit your cousin who has been in the hospital for a while. You plan to borrow your neighbor car to go to the hospital because your car has been repaired. What will you say to your neighbor to lend his car? ……………………………………………………………………………………………… |