An Investigation into the Request Realization Patterns of Turkish ELT Students[1]

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Abstract: This study aimed to identify the request strategies of senior ELT students and gain insight on their pragmatic competence in speech acts of requests. The study was conducted at a state university in Turkey, and 120 students (93 female and 27 male) participated. Mixed model research was adopted, so the present study benefits from both qualitative and quantitative methods. Firstly, the qualitative data were collected through a discourse completion test, prepared by the researchers. In addition, a rating scale was designed to rate the appropriateness of the students' requests. Later, the quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and the qualitative data were analyzed based on the coding manual used within the Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989). The results of the study indicated that ELT students tended to prefer conventional indirect request strategies except in one situation where they requested of a higher-status interlocutor rather than of an equal status one. That is, they appeared to have more difficulty requesting of a higher-status interlocutor appropriately or politely.

Anahtar sözcükler
Edimbilim yetisi, söz eylem, rica etme stratejisi, dolaylılık,

İngilizce Öğretmenliği Bölümündeki Türk Öğrencilerin Rica Söz Eylemlerini Gerçekleştirme Biçimleri Üzerine Bir İnceleme
Öz: Bu çalışmanın amacı dördüncü sınıf İngilizce Öğretmenliği Bölümü öğrencilerinin rica etme stratejilerini belirlemek ve bu öğrencilerin rica eylemlerindeki edimbilim yetisi hakkında anlayış kazanmaktır. Çalışma Türkiye'deki bir devlet üniversitesindeki 120 öğrenci (93 kadın, 27 erkek) ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu araştırmada karma araştırma yöntemi benimsenmiş olup nitel ve nicel yöntem birlikte kullanılmıştır. Nitel veri, araştırmacılar tarafından geliştirilen Söylem Tamamlama Testi ile toplanmıştır. Ayrıca, öğrencilerin rica söz eylemlerinin uygunluğunu puanlamak için değerlendirme ölçeği hazırlanmıştır. Çalışmadaki nicel veri SPSS 20 programı ile analiz edilmiştir. Nitel verinin içerik analizi ise Blum-Kulka ve diğerlerinin CCSARP (Kültürlerarası söz eylem projesi) kapsamında kullandıkları kodlama kılavuzuna (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989) göre yapılmıştır. Bu çalışma İngilizce Öğretmenliği Bölümü öğrencilerinin kendileriyle eşit statüdeki muhataplarıyla kalıplaşmış dolaylı rica stratejilerini tercih etme eğilimi gösterdiklerini ancak kendilerinden daha yüksek statüdeki muhataplarından uygun ve kibar bir biçimde rica etme konusunda zorlandıkları sonucuna varmıştır.

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1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence has attracted a considerable amount of research interest in second language (L2) learning in recent years. It refers to "the speaker's knowledge and use of rules of appropriateness and politeness which dictate the way the speaker will understand and formulate speech acts" (Koike, 1989, p. 281). Unfortunately, many interlanguage pragmatics studies to date indicate that L2 learners have difficulty in performing a speech act appropriately or politely (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Koike, 1989), which makes it a critical issue that needs to be investigated more deeply.

Research on pragmatic competence in L2 learning has mostly focused on variations for different proficiency levels (Francis, 1997; Otçu-Zeyrek, 2008; Taguchi, 2006). There appears to be a strong probability that students' pragmatic competence increases in accordance with their proficiency level (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Francis, 1997), although it is not easy to develop pragmatic competence at a satisfactory level even for advanced-level L2 students (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). It is crucial that L2 learners improve their pragmatic competence to avoid any possible misunderstandings or "pragmatic failure" (Thomas, 1983, p.91) in their communication with their interlocutors (Thomas, 1983). That is, they need to adopt the pragmatic norms of the target culture in order to communicate appropriately and politely in the target language because the use of speech acts differs across cultures.

Speech acts have generated a substantial amount of interest among researchers for more than two decades. They refer to functions or actions of utterances in language (Austin, 1962, p. 108) and include requests, apologies, complaints, refusals, compliments, and commands among many others. The speech act theory was first introduced to the field by Austin (1962, p. 108), for whom communication consists of *speech acts* that are used in a systematic way to achieve certain purposes, and it was enhanced by Searle (1979). Austin (1962) classifies the speech acts into three categories: (a) the locutionary act (literal meaning), (b) the illocutionary act (the actual intent), and (c) the perlocutionary act (the effects of the utterances on the listener).

Second language research has mostly focused on requests, apologies and refusals (Ellis, 1994). For example, a number of research studies have been conducted regarding requests in the literature (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989; Cohen & Olshtain, 1993; Ellis, 1994; Koike, 1989; Taguchi, 2006). Mir (1995) investigated the role of social context in request performances in three participant groups. One group consisted of 37 native Spanish speakers; another group included 34 native speakers of English, and 33 Spanish native speakers learning English (at advanced or high-intermediate level) as a foreign language formed the last group. The participants were given 24 situations and expected to produce requests in response to those situations. All the participant groups had a tendency to perform requests similarly in the contexts, characterized by the type of the power relationships between the interlocutors. It can be understood from Mir's (1995) study that power relationship between the speakers might affect the choice of requests.

There has been little research on English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' speech acts of requests or request strategies of student teachers studying in English Language Teaching (ELT) departments in Turkish contexts (Balcı, 2009; Kılıçkaya, 2010; Otcu & Zeyrek, 2008). That is why this study looks at the request strategies of student teachers of English in a Turkish cultural context. It is useful here to clarify what is meant by a request strategy. A request strategy refers to the compulsory selection of *directness* level by which the requester realizes his/her request, and directness means the extent to which illocutionary intent (actual intent) of the speaker is visible from the locution (henceforth request utterance) (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 278). Requests are pre-event acts because they express the expectations that the speaker has of the hearer with respect to future actions, verbal or non-verbal (Blum-Kulka et

al., 1989, p. 11). They place an effort on the speaker to persuade the listener to do something, which makes it a "face threatening act," (Brown & Levinson, 1987), a threat to the hearer's self-image, in a sense   because the hearer can interpret the request as a pressure or impediment on freedom of action (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 65-66). Therefore, L2 speakers need to produce requests with an appropriate amount of directness or indirectness in L2 to avoid communication breakdowns.

Appropriateness, which is an indispensable component of pragmatic competence, is a term that relates to indirectness and politeness closely. For this reason, many studies actually have analyzed appropriateness of speech acts in terms of the level of indirectness (e.g., Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Some linguists like Brown and Levinson (1987) or Leech (1983) claim that there is an important relationship between indirectness and politeness, implying that the less direct an utterance is, the more polite it will be. On the other hand, it is not always possible to say that the greatest level of indirectness in the use of speech acts leads to the greatest level of politeness. Blum-Kulka (1987) re-examined indirectness and politeness notions in requests with four groups of native speakers of Hebrew and English and found that the most indirect strategies (hints) were not regarded as the highest level in politeness. The concept of indirectness is central to the present study. The framework of the Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), which is one of the most extensive attempts to investigate universal or cross-cultural pragmatic rules in speech act (requests and apologies) realizations in this respect, is used for the current study.

There have been several studies addressing the speech acts of requests in EFL or ELT settings in Turkey (Balcı, 2009; Kılıçkaya, 2010; Otçu & Zeyrek, 2008) as were mentioned. Otçu and Zeyrek (2008) examined the developmental trends of Turkish EFL learners' requests, using interactional role-plays to elicit the learner data among other types of data. Interestingly, they implied that as the proficiency of the learners increases, they are more prone to pragmatic transfer. Later, Kılıçkaya (2010) examined the Turkish EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge in their use of requests, employing a discourse completion test (DCT) for collecting the data, and he reported that the students did not demonstrate a satisfactory level of achievement in the use of request strategies for situations that required a particular level of politeness although they had the linguistic resources required to operate pragmatically for the use of requests. Although these studies are noteworthy, using a much larger sample size for a single, seemingly more homogeneous sample group might contribute to a deeper understanding of ELT students' request strategies and their pragmatic competence in their use of requests.

One of the foci of this study is to determine whether gender plays a role in the appropriateness of the requests of senior ELT students. There are studies in the literature that regard women's speech as more polite in general (Holmes, 1995; Coates, 2013). According to Macaulay's (2001) study, females are more polite in their indirect request performances. The present study is concerned with the appropriateness of requests of male and female ELT students in Turkish context as there is a scarcity of research in this area to the researchers' knowledge.

In the light of the pragmatics research to date, it may be argued that Turkish ELT students do not display pragmatic competence in their use of requests at a satisfactory level in their L2-English, and it can be seen that there is still a need for more research on request strategies to be able to understand the indirectness issue in a much deeper sense. These considerations, combined with earlier remarks made about pragmatic competence, indirectness and politeness are the basic starting points of this research study.

In other words, this study aims to determine the request strategies that the ELT students use, and to gain insight into their pragmatic competence in their speech acts of requests for male and female students.

The research questions of this study are therefore as follows:

(1) What request strategies do advanced-level university ELT students use in terms of indirectness in line with Blum-Kulka's CCSARP framework?

(2) What are the mean appropriateness ratings of requests for male and female students when the request situations are considered separately and as a whole?

2. Methodology
2.1. Research Design

It was decided that the best method to adopt for this investigation was the mixed model research methodology; hence, the current study used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The first aim of this study was to investigate the request strategies of senior ELT students in terms of indirectness, which required a qualitative method as the data were collected through a DCT. On the other hand, the second aim of the study was to explore the appropriateness ratings of requests for male and female students. For this purpose, the requests of senior ELT students were assessed through a rating scale, which yielded quantitative data. It should be noted here that combining qualitative and quantitative methods in this study in line with our research questions and aims contributed to a better understanding of the request strategies of ELT students and the appropriateness of the requests. Johnson and Christensen (2004) state that mixed research "is based on the philosophy of pragmatism (i.e., what works is what is important)" (p. 52). This is the principle that is embraced for the current study.

Different combinations of qualitative and quantitative research methods are involved in mixed methods researches, which can occur either at the data collection or at the analysis stage (Dörnyei, 2007). As Johnson and Christensen mention, in the mixed model research, the researchers might choose to collect only qualitative data and analyze it using qualitative data analysis techniques, but later they can decide to convert these qualitative data into variables and analyze them using quantitative analysis techniques statistically. This is the approach taken in the present study to look into the appropriateness of the requests, which made up the second research question, addressing one of the main issues in the study. The researchers converted the qualitative data, relating to requests, obtained by the use of DCT, into numerical data using the rating scale. In brief, the researchers needed to use both qualitative and quantitative research methods for this study.

2.2. Participants

The study was carried out in the Department of English Language Teaching at a state university in Ankara in Turkey. This department is a four-year pre-service teacher education program which includes both theoretical and practical courses, such as Educational Sciences and practicum courses respectively. In addition to the courses directly related to English language teaching, this department also provides student teachers with linguistics courses such as pragmatics.

Convenient sampling was adopted, and 120 senior ELT trainees, studying at Gazi University, were the participants of the study. Convenient sampling is "the most common non-probability sampling type in L2 research, where an important criterion of sample selection is the convenience to and resources of the researcher" (Dörnyei & Csizer, 2012 p. 81). It was hard to reach so many participants at once due to the busy schedule of the senior ELT students; therefore, convenient sampling was used, which allowed a quick and convenient method in terms of the resources at hand. In addition, the participants selected could be regarded as a good representation of prospective ELT students in Turkey in general as they are attending one of the state universities, which have a similar program in terms of the courses and ordering of these courses.

The senior ELT student teachers were chosen for the current study because they seemed to be the most appropriate for the investigation for two reasons. Firstly, they are assumed to be advanced speakers of English as a foreign language, and secondly, they are expected to graduate within one year and represent teachers-to-be of the future. All of the participants were aged between 20 and 26. Age was not treated as a separate variable in the study due to relative homogeneity of the age of the participant group. Of 120 students, 93 were female and 27 were male. Gender was included in the variables for the investigation.

2.3. Data Collection Tools
2.3.1. The discourse completion test
A DCT was developed by the researchers to collect the qualitative data for the study. The preparation of the DCT required a systematic process. The first step was to form an item pool. After the right items were selected for the DCT, opinions of three experts were taken on the appropriateness of the items and its use for the target. One of the experts was a native speaker of American English in the ELT profession, while the other two experts were assistant professors at a state university in Turkey (one in the ELT department, the other in the English Linguistics Department). Two of the expert opinions were received in a face-to-face session. The other was received online. Later, the DCT was piloted with 15 ELT students to be able to make the necessary changes and ensure that the target speech act could be elicited. It was piloted with a group who had the same criteria for the sampling of the actual study. After the necessary changes were carried out, the DCT took its final form and was efficient in eliciting the target speech act of requests.

The use of DCTs has been the subject of much criticism. Some researchers have claimed that DCTs provide unnatural data, which only help understanding natural data, and they limit authentic communication as they eliminate certain semantic formulas and may not allow for the use of some negotiation strategies, widely used in natural spoken data (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992; Beebe & Cummings, 1996). While acknowledging its weaknesses, DCT is regarded as the data collection tool for the present study for three reasons. Firstly, well-designed DCTs can provide valuable data regarding speakers' "pragmalinguistic" knowledge of strategies and linguistic forms (Kasper & Rose, 2002, as cited in Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010). Secondly, a big advantage of DCTs is that researchers are able to test large sample sizes in equivalent situations (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992, p. 36) which was the case for this study. In addition, DCT is believed to be more economical in terms of the time allocated for the data collection and data analysis process for this study. Lastly, as Yuan (2001) states, if the study aims to carry out an initial description of realization patterns of a specific speech act of a certain language, which is what was done in the present study, DCT is still a preferable tool despite its limitations. It should also be stated that many previous studies used DCT as a data collection tool to gain insights into requests (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Jalilifar, 2009; Kılıçkaya, 2010). Hence, acknowledging its weaknesses, it was still preferred to use a written DCT in this particular study as it meets our demands in terms of eliciting relevant data for the study. The DCT included four situations to elicit requests from the participants as responses in written form. The first situation was about a student asking his/her classmate to lend him/her a book for an assignment. The second situation was about a request of a worker from his/her boss for a pay rise. The third situation was about a teacher asking his/her colleague to be in the jury for an oral exam instead of him/her. Lastly, the fourth situation was about a person asking his/her friend to pay his/her debt (See Appendix 2).

2.3.2. The rating scale
The researchers designed a rating scale, entitled *Rating Scale for Appropriateness of Speech Act Patterns,* in order to convert the qualitative data, obtained from the DCT, into numerical data. The use of rating scales in the research is widespread. According to Cohen, Manion, and

Morrison (2007), rating scales not only provide a possibility for flexible responses but also allow for quantitative analysis such as calculations of frequencies and correlations. Nevertheless, rating scales have their own limitations due to their fixity of responses. To clarify, the respondents are required to select from a certain choice in a rating scale (Cohen et al., 2007). The rating scale used for the present study is a five-point scale used to assess the appropriateness of the speech act patterns elicited in the DCT. Three experts' opinions were taken on the appropriateness of the scale for its use in the study, and the required changes were made on it prior to its latest form. The Cronbach alpha value was reported as 0.715 for the rating scale. The value indicated the reliability of the scores for the current study. Additionally, the rating scale was designed in such a way that politeness was considered as well as the degree of appropriateness of the speech act for grading. Hence, the responses of the students were rated on the appropriateness and politeness of their requests via the rating scale by two raters. Interrater reliability was calculated between the two raters' grading as can be seen in Table 1, which presents correlation values for each item pair. It can be inferred from Table 1 that the interrater reliability has been achieved.

Table 1
Correlation Values between Item Pairs

Interrater Reliability	R2.1-R1.1	R2. 2-R1.2	R2.3-R1.3	R2.4-R1.4
Correlation (r)	.97	.93	.94	.96

Note: R represents *rater*.

2.4. Procedure

The data collection process started in April 2015 and ended after one week in the spring term of 2014-2015 academic year. The data were collected after the participants agreed to take part in the study. A DCT and a rating scale comprised the research instruments. ELT students were expected to complete the DCT. During the data collection session, students were given four situations in the DCT and were expected to realize speech acts of requests as responses to the given situations in written form. It took about 15 minutes for the participants to complete the DCT. The rating scale was utilized to rate the qualitative data, obtained via the DCT. One of the researchers and a British English instructor were recruited to rate the appropriateness of the request speech acts of the students based on the five-point rating scale developed by the researchers. Cohen (2004, p. 321) states that the raters must go through the grading process in a consistent manner because, whether they are native speakers of the language or not, their gender and compatibility with the respondents' personality might play a role in their ratings and affect how harsh their ratings are. For the current study, raters rated the responses separately, but an initial session was organized to discuss the criteria and theoretical background of the study. While the first rater is female, the second rater, who is a native English instructor, is male. Thus, one might claim that this rating was carried out as objectively as possible thanks to varied features of the raters within the practical constraints of the study.

2.5. Data Analysis

The data gathered through the research instruments were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques. The study used content analysis in order to gain insight into the request strategies of ELT students in terms of indirectness, which addresses the issue of the first research question. Content analysis is a procedure, during which the classification of many words of texts yield much fewer categories (Weber, 1990, as cited in Cohen et al., 2007). Accordingly, the data collected from senior ELT students through the DCT were

analyzed based on the coding manual used by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) used in Cross-Cultural Speech Act Project (See Appendix 1). This analysis of the qualitative data was carried out in several steps for the present study. Firstly, the researchers entered all the qualitative data into a computer file so that they could organize the data and work systematically. This technique contributed to the flow of the coding the data. Next, the responses of the students, which included the requests, were determined as codes. With the help of Blum-Kulka et al.'s coding manual, categories were formed and matched with the appropriate codes. The parts that were not encountered in the data were eliminated from the classification. Later, the researchers had the coded data in hard-copy to check the appropriateness of the codes.

The same coded data were examined again one month later by the same researchers to increase the reliability of the coding system (intra-coder reliability). In addition, an expert opinion was taken on the appropriateness of the coding especially during the data analysis phase when coding the data. After the request data were coded, the percentage and frequency calculations were held for the categories that emerged from the data. Lastly, the analysis of descriptive statistics was carried out in order to calculate the appropriateness request scores of the ELT students, which comprised the second research question of the study. Specifically, the mean and standard deviation scores were calculated using SPSS, version 20.

3. Results and Discussion
3.1. Results
The analysis of the data obtained by the DCT is based on a coding manual used by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). The semantic formulas categorized by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) were used only to determine the request strategies of the ELT students, which comprised the first research question for this study. With respect to the first research question of the present study, eight request strategy types were determined as follows: (1) *mood derivable*, (2) *explicit performatives*, (3) *hedged performatives*, (4) *want statements* and (5) *obligation statements*, which are direct requests; (6) *the preparatory strategies* (ability, possibility, willingness, permission, and consultative devices), classified as conventional indirect requests, (7) *strong hint* and (8) *mild hint*, which are categorized as nonconventional indirect requests. Only one of the request strategy types determined by Blum-Kulka et al. was not encountered: *Language specific suggestory formula.*

Eight request strategy types were determined on three major levels of increasing indirectness. The requests strategies are presented with their calculations of frequency and percentages in Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4.

Table 2
Frequency and Percentages of Direct Requests

Direct requests	Frequency	Percentage
Mood derivable	16	3.53
Explicit performatives	1	0.22
Hedged performatives	2	0.44
Want statement (Desire or Wish)	17	3.75
Obligation	2	0.44
Total	38	8.38

Note: the total number of request tokens is 453.

Table 3
Frequency and Percentages of Conventional Indirect Requests

Conventional indirect	Frequency	Percentage

requests (Preparatory)		
Ability	206	45.47
Permission	72	15.89
Possibility	21	4.63
Willingness	15	3.31
Consultative device	18	3.97
Total	332	73.29

Note: the total number of request tokens is 453.

Table 4
Frequency and Percentages of Nonconventional Indirect Requests

Nonconventional indirect requests	Frequency	Percentage
Strong hint	79	17.44
Mild hint	4	0.88
Total	83	18.32

Note: the total number of request tokens is 453.

Prior to moving on to explain the frequency and percentages of the strategies used by the participants and explaining the request strategy types, it is worth noting that there were supposed to be 480 tokens of requests as there were one hundred and twenty participants and four request situations. However, only 453 requests were taken into consideration due to missing, irrelevant or invalid replies. As seen in Table 3, the most common request strategy preferred by the participants is the *preparatory* strategy, corresponding to a percentage of 73.29. Next, the findings in Table 4 show that the students' second preference was nonconventional indirect request strategies, the percentage of which is 18.32. Lastly, the least frequently used category was direct requests, corresponding to the percentage of 8.38 as indicated in Table 2. Referring to Table 4, it is visible that the second most common request strategy encountered in the data is *strong hint* corresponding to the percentage of 17.44. The third most frequently used request strategy is the *want statement* category, corresponding to the percentage of 3.75. Following this, the fourth most frequent request strategy used in the data is *mood derivable* as indicated in Table 2. Its percentage is equivalent to 3.53. Looking at the tables above, it can be seen that the other request strategies observed in the data are *mild hint* (0.88%), *obligation* (0.44%), *hedged performatives* (0.44%) and lastly, *explicit performative*, the percentage of which is 0. 22. As was mentioned earlier, one of the nine request strategies determined in by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) was not encountered in the content analysis of the present study: *Suggestory formula*.

Now the examples of the request strategies preferred by the participants in the present study are provided in Tables 5, 6, and 7 for direct and conventional indirect and nonconventional indirect requests sequentially.

Table 5
Examples for Direct Requests

Direct requests	Examples
Mood derivable	"Please substitute for me in the oral exam because I am ill." (Situation 3, P19).
	"Please give me my money back" (Situation 4, P5).
Explicit performatives	"I request you that you be in a speaking jury for an oral exam because I have a sore throat and don't feel well."

	(Situation 3, P56).
Hedged performatives	"May I ask you to be jury instead of me? I have a sore throat." (Situation 3, P36).
Want Statement (Desire or wish)	"Mr. Taylor, I want a raise in my salary." (Situation 2, P7).
Obligation	"I have been working here nearly for a year, so the raising of my salary should be done." (Situation 2, P110).

Note: "P" is used as a symbol for participants.

Table 6
Examples for Conventional Indirect Requests

Conventional indirect requests (Preparatory)	Examples
Ability	"Can you give me your book?" (Situation 1, P1).
	"Hi, Mr. Taylor, can you increase my salary please?" (Situation 2, P17).
Permission	
	"Sir, I have been working here for a year. I think I deserve a raise. May I take my salary in a raise?" (Situation 2, P87).
Possibility	"Is there any chance to raise my salary, Mr. Taylor?" (Situation 2, P102)
	"Is it possible for you to pay me back soon?" (Situation 4, P99).
Willingness	"Would you like to be in the jury for my place?" (Situation 3, P75).
Consultative device	"Do you mind if I took your book for two days?" (Situation 1, P95).
	"Would you mind being jury instead of me?" (Situation 3, P86)

Note: P is used as a symbol for participants

Table 7

Examples for Nonconventional Indirect Requests

Nonconventional indirect requests	Examples
Strong hint	"I have been working here for a long time. I think I deserve a raise." (Situation 2, P108).
	"I am really really sorry to say that, but I have run out of money" (Situation 4, P112).
Mild hint	"Sir, I have been working in this lovely company for a year and I believe the company likes me." (Situation 2, P30).

Note: P is used as a symbol for participants

Before moving on to the discussion section, it is important to give the frequencies of the request strategies according to each situation and to note the status of the interlocutors as they may be linked to the choice of the request strategies used by ELT students. It is possible to see the relevant findings in Table 8. The first situation was about a student asking his/her classmate to lend him/her a book for an assignment. Interestingly, it is clear in Table 8 that the only two request strategies observed in the first situation are the *preparatory* (99.15%) and *mood derivable* (0.85%). The second situation was about a request of a worker from his/her boss for a pay rise. As can be seen in Table 8, the most frequently used strategy was found to be *strong hint* (51.51%). The second most frequent request strategy was *preparatory* (31.31%). *Want statements* followed it with a percentage of 13.13. Later, three students utilized *mild hints* (3.03%), and one student preferred *obligation* in this situation (1.01%). What is striking about these findings is that only in this situation *strong hint* outnumbered *preparatory strategies*. The participants preferred to be nonconventional indirect when they were interacting with a higher-status interlocutor.

The third situation was about a teacher asking his/her colleague to be in the jury for an oral exam instead of him/her. The findings display that the most frequently used request strategy was *preparatory* in this situation (93.28%). The second most frequent strategy encountered in this situation was *mood derivable* (4.20%). The other three strategies observed in the given situation were *explicit performative* (0.84%), *hedged performative* (0.84%), and *want statement* (0.84%).

The last situation was about a person asking his/her friend to pay his/her debt. The most frequently used strategy was found to be the *preparatory* again (62.39%) as Table 8 shows. However, the second most used request strategy was *strong hint* (23.93%). *Want statements* followed it with a percentage of 2.56. The other request strategies used in the given situation were *mild hint* (0.85%), *hedged performative* (0.85%), and *obligation* (0.85%).

Table 8
Request Strategy Types According to DCT Items

DCT Item	Hearer	Status	Request strategy types used	Token	Percentage
Situation 1: Borrowing a book	Classmate	Equal	Mood derivable	1	0.85
			Preparatory	117	99.15
				Total: 118	
Situation 2: Pay rise	Boss	Higher	Desire or wish	13	13.13
			Obligation	1	1.01
			Preparatory	31	31.31
			Mild hint	3	3.03
			Strong hint	51	51.51
				Total: 99	
Situation 3: Substitution for jury in an oral exam	Colleague	Equal	Mood derivable	5	4.20
			Explicit performative	1	0.84
			Hedged performative	1	0.84
			Desire or wish	1	0.84
			Preparatory	111	93.28
				Total:119	

Situation 4: Friend Equal Asking for money back	Mood derivable	10	8.55
	Hedged performative	1	0.85
	Desire or wish	3	2.56
	Obligation	1	0.85
	Preparatory	73	62.39
	Mild hint	1	0.85
	Strong hint	28	23.93
		Total: 117	

A descriptive statistics analysis was performed to answer the second research question: "what are the mean appropriateness ratings of request scores for male and female students when the request situations are considered separately and as a whole?" Table 9 and Table 10 provide the results obtained from the descriptive statistics of request scores for female and male participants respectively. As illustrated in the tables, the mean request score is 14.48 for females and 13.67 for males. Looking at the situations separately, it can be seen from the Tables 9 and 10 that the highest mean score is obtained in the third situation, which is about asking your colleague to substitute for you in a speaking jury for an oral exam both for females (4.00) and males (3.89). Furthermore, what is interesting is that the lowest mean request score is encountered in the second situation, which is about asking a pay raise from your boss, in both gender groups. When the data in Table 10 are compared with the data in Table 9, it is observed that the mean scores of female students are higher than the male students' mean scores for requests.

Table 9
Descriptive Statistics for Request Scores of Female Students

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Sdt. Deviation
S1	93	2.00	5.00	3.70	.857
S2	93	1.00	5.00	3.35	1.03
S3	93	1.00	5.00	4.00	1.02
S4	93	.00	5.00	3.43	1.28
Total	93	6.00	20.00	14.48	3.21

Note: "S" is used for the situations in the DCT.

Table 10
Descriptive Statistics for Request Scores of Male Students

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Sdt. Deviation
S1	27	1.00	5.00	3.30	1.10
S2	27	.00	5.00	3.22	1.19
S3	27	2.00	5.00	3.89	.85
S4	27	1.00	5.00	3.26	1.23
Total	27	8.00	18.00	13.67	2.83

"S" is used for the situations in the DCT.

3.2. Discussion
The first research question of the study seeks to identify the request strategies that ELT students use in terms of directness or indirectness. The data were collected through the DCT, and the content analysis was carried out to explore the request strategies that the ELT students used. The researchers adopted the coding scheme of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) used in the CCSARP to code and analyze the data on the level of indirectness. The detailed analysis of

the data showed that the participants used eight of the nine requesting strategy types identified in CCSARP carried out by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). The only request strategy that was not encountered in this study was the *language suggestory formula*. The lack of this request strategy can be attributed to cultural and contextual differences of the settings of the study and might be relevant to the difference of the situations used in the studies or the use of fewer situations in our study. The researchers utilized from only four situations in the DCT designed for the current study. Furthermore, the number of the participants might play a role in this difference. On the other hand, the fact that the number of sampling used in this study is not a small one might have contributed to the observation of eight request strategies in this study. This rather wide range of request types could also be related to the role of instruction in the ELT setting. Balcı carried out a similar study with 20 native speakers of English and 20 Turkish speakers of English at the age of 14-15 years in 2009. In her study, she aimed to define and compare request and apology strategies based on the cross-cultural realization project, too. In her study, Balcı (2009) found that Turkish speakers of English used only three of the request strategies, which were *preparatory*, *mood derivable* and *strong hint* while native speakers of English used four request strategies. This study tends to verify the claims of the researchers.

According to the results of the study, the most frequently-used request strategy was found to be *preparatory*. These findings are compatible with those of previous studies (Balcı, 2009; Otçu & Zeyrek, 2008) in which the *query preparatory* was found to be the most frequent request strategy used by Turkish speakers of English as well.

It is noteworthy to discuss the fact that *preparatory* was the most frequently preferred request strategy in all the situations except situation 2, in which *strong hint* was found to be the most frequently-used strategy type. It is also essential to mention that only in situation 2, the speaker interacts with a higher status interlocutor. Therefore, it can be claimed that data revealed status sensitivity here. Moreover, it can be said that students tend to be less direct when interacting with a higher-status interlocutor. This finding matches with the results observed in the study of Otçu and Zeyrek (2008). Their study demonstrated that *strong hints* were used at a higher level (overused) by upper-intermediate students although they were rarely preferred by lower-intermediate groups (p. 283). This result could also be related to the findings of a research study carried out by Mir (1995) who investigated the role of social context in request performances in three participant groups. Mir (1995) emphasizes the type of the power relationships between the interlocutors. For instance, speakers produced directs requests more when their interlocutor was in a more powerful status. Somehow similarly, in the current study, *strong hint* was the most used request strategy only in the second situation in which the requester was supposed to interact with a higher-status interlocutor unlike in the other situations where the requester interacted with an equal-status interlocutor. That is to say, the choice of ELT students' requests is affected by the status of the interlocutor, and they tend to be indirect in their requests when their interlocutor is more powerful than them as in Mir's (1995) study. The reason for this result can be explained by the idea that requesting from a higher status can be hard or can sometimes even be considered as risky or impolite in Turkish culture, which has large *power distance* and *low individualism* and *strong uncertainty avoidance* according to Hofstede's study (1983,1986). That is, power is a basic fact of society, and power holders are seen as privileged, and individuals who have less power may experience high anxiety and stress in their lives, which may lead to strong uncertainty-probably an overuse of strong hints in the context of the present study to avoid threats. That is why, people may be shy or hesitant to make a request of a higher-status interlocutor in Turkish culture. They tend to make use of hints to avoid risks, but the overuse of indirectness

could cause more misunderstandings. The requester can sometimes be so indirect that the request may not be perceived by the hearer as a request performance.

Descriptive statistics were applied to answer the second research question: "What are the mean appropriateness ratings of requests for male and female students when the request situations are considered separately and as a whole?" The results indicate that the mean scores of female students are higher than the male students' mean scores for requests. It is therefore possible to claim that females are better at performing requests appropriately or politely compared with male students. This is in line with the claims of Holmes (1995), who views women's speech as more polite than men's and Coates (2013), who suggests that women use more polite linguistics forms than men. This claim is also supported by the findings of a research study carried out by Macaulay (2001), who suggests that female speakers are more polite and provocative in their indirect request forms than the males are. What is striking about the results of the present study is that the lowest mean request score is observed in the second situation, which is about asking for a pay raise from your boss, for both males and females. This result can be explained by the impact of the status difference or power difference between the interlocutors because only in the second situations, the requester was to interact with a higher-status interlocutor, a boss in this case.

As stated before, *strong hint* was found to be the most frequently used request strategy only in the second situation. In the other three situations, the *preparatory* was found to be the most-frequently used request strategy. According to a research study (Blum-Kulka, 1987), the *query preparatory* categorized as conventional indirect requests was rated as the most polite in Hebrew and English while the most direct strategy (mood derivable) was rated as the least polite. On the other hand, the most indirect strategies (hints) were not perceived as the most polite. Thus, the highest level of indirectness does not mean the highest level of politeness (Blum-Kulka, 1987). However, it is inevitable that employers can affect the career of their employees both in negative and positive ways (Thomas, 2013). Therefore, it can be stated that requesters hesitate to make a request from higher-status interlocutors, or they experience difficulty in performing the request appropriately as they overuse hints (*strong hints*), which may hinder the requestee from understanding the intended request.

The requesters' choice of more indirect request strategies (strong hints) for their higher-status interlocutors could also be related to the very nature of the speech acts of requests. Speech acts are face-threatening acts, which can be interpreted by the hearers as a hindrance on their freedom to act, which may lead to the speakers' hesitation to make the request as they fear to expose a need or risk the loss of hearer's face (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). People might also fear making a request from a boss due to the possibility of rejection or much more. An inappropriate type of request could even affect the requester's career in a negative way as the boss has the power. These conceptions might create more pressure or stress for the requester, which could result in failure in performing a request appropriately or politely. Thus, it is apparent that ELT student teachers, who are also EFL learners in a way, tend to experience more difficulty in requesting when they interact with a higher-status interlocutor. It can be claimed that their choice of request strategies is affected by the power relationships of the interlocutors because they overused *strong hints*- the highest level of indirectness in request strategies- only when the interlocutor was in a more powerful status. However, when the speakers' positions were equal, such as colleagues, they preferred less indirect request strategies. This finding of the study seems to be consistent with the findings of a recent study carried out by Kılıçkaya (2010) to examine the pragmatic knowledge of EFL students, who were also second-year student teachers at a state university in Turkey. He claimed that students did not demonstrate a satisfactory level of achievement in the use of request strategies for situations that required a particular level of politeness although they had the

linguistic means required to use requests in an appropriate way pragmatically (Kılıçkaya, 2010).

Overall, it seems to be challenging for ELT students to request appropriately while interacting with a higher-status interlocutor. This could be explained by the EFL context in which ELT students learned English. They have limited amount of exposure to input compared to ESL context, for instance, which probably makes them more inclined to benefiting from their own culture (Turkish culture) even in their request strategies in English. Keeping in mind that Turkey is considered as a country that has power distance and low individualism (Hofstede, 1983, 1986), the ELT students' overuse of strong hints with higher-status interlocutors can be explained by the power relationships of individuals in Turkish culture.

4. Conclusions and suggestions

The current study was designed with two main aims: (1) to determine the request strategies that ELT students use in terms of directness or indirectness, (2) to gain insight about their request patterns in terms of appropriateness and politeness. To answer these questions, a DCT and a rating scale were used as research instruments. The qualitative data collected through the DCT were analyzed based on the coding manual used by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) used in Cross-Cultural Speech Act Project.

The results of this study indicate that there are eight request strategies used by the ELT students. They use *mood derivable, explicit performatives, hedged performatives, want statements* and *obligation statements*, which are direct requests; they use *preparatory strategies* (ability, possibility, willingness, permission, and consultative devices), classified as conventional indirect requests and they use *strong hint* and *mild hint*, which are categorized as nonconventional indirect requests. Moreover, the results of this investigation show that the ELT students have used conventional indirect requests most frequently. The second most frequently-used category is nonconventional indirect requests. Thus, the least frequently-used category is direct requests. Therefore, it can be concluded from the study that the ELT students generally prefer using indirect requests strategies to direct requests. Interestingly, the study also reveals that requesters are the least direct when interacting with a higher-status interlocutor. In this study, the ELT students tended to prefer conventional indirect requests most except in one situation, which was the second situation (DCT item) where the requester was to make a request of a higher-status interlocutor- a boss in this case. The most frequent request strategy in this situation was *strong hints* classified as nonconventional indirect requests, unlike the other three situations where the requester was to communicate with equal-status interlocutors. That is to say, the ELT students seem to be hesitant to make a request of someone who has more power like a boss. They tend to use hints excessively and not in a very polite or appropriate way when they are to interact with a higher-status interlocutor concerning their requests. Thus, it can be inferred from the study that the status of the interlocutor influences the request strategy types preferred by the requester. This is probably related to the nature of requests as the face threatening acts.

As to students' pragmatic competence in their requests, female ELT students have had higher mean scores than male students, but overall, the ELT students generally seem to perform their requests in a pragmatically appropriate way. However, they have had the lowest mean score for the situation 2, where they were supposed to make a request of a higher-status interlocutor. In addition, the highest level of indirectness, nonconventional indirectness is observed to be in this situation as well. Hence, the ELT students seem to have difficulty interacting with a higher-status interlocutor in their requests in an appropriate or polite way.

This study is significant as it enhances our understanding of requests as face threatening acts, Turkish ELT students' request strategies in English and the role of power dynamics (between the interlocutors) in the ELT student teachers' choice of request strategies.

To be able to communicate effectively in a target language, one should be pragmatically competent. Performing speech acts appropriately in a target language is an essential part of pragmatic competence. Requests are one of the most-used speech acts, and they are face-threatening acts; thus, it is important to be able to request in an effective way so that the hearer could meet the demand accordingly. It is also important to perform the request appropriately not to cause any kind of pragmatic failure or communication breakdown, which could lead to crucial problems. In this sense, foreign language classrooms should be able to provide the most suitable context where students can achieve pragmatic competence and behave accordingly in English as a foreign language. The study offers several implications and suggestions for instruction. Firstly, it should be ensured that the EFL learners and the ELT student teachers are equipped with a sufficient amount of pragmatic knowledge and competence. To do so, pragmatics courses should be involved or increased in both ELT settings like teacher education programs at universities and in EFL settings like departments of foreign languages. Syllabuses or curricula should be arranged in such a way that students can practice their pragmatic knowledge; for instance, the ELT students can work on their speech act performance in English in various situations including different social statuses in addition to gaining a theoretical basis in their pragmatic courses in an ELT setting. Drama activities like role-plays could be helpful for this aim. Students should be taught what is considered pragmatically appropriate and polite when performing any kind of speech acts in a target language. All of these aspects should also be incorporated into the textbooks used. One more suggestion would be to benefit from the technology in EFL and ELT classrooms or as out-of-class activities. More specifically, watching series and movies in the target language might contribute to the pragmatic competence of students. These should be encouraged among EFL students and student teachers. Teacher education programs should also encourage student teachers to study or travel abroad via Erasmus programs as students can have more opportunities to practice their pragmatic knowledge in their communication with different interlocutors.

The limitations of the current study should be acknowledged. This study did not use triangulation for practical reasons such as the number of participants and the workload of the fourth grade ELT students, yet further studies might compensate for this gap by triangulating their data. Furthermore, the current study has concentrated on only one speech act. More speech acts can be studied within the scope of the study. The number of request situations could be increased, too. This study has used a DCT and a rating scale as the research instruments, further studies might utilize different data collection tools like role play, for instance. Pragmatic transfer between Turkish and English could also be examined. Moreover, further studies might explore the role of instruction of speech acts in an EFL and ELT setting.

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Appendix 1. Coding Framework

Request strategies described in the coding manual of the CCSARP (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 278-281)

Mood derivable
(Derivable from grammatical mood).
Leave me alone

Explicit performative
(The illocutionary point to make a request is named by the speakers in an explicit way).
I am asking you to move your car.

Hedged performative
(The illocutionary verb that denotes the intent of request is modified by modal verbs etc.)
I must/ have to ask you to clean the kitchen right now.

Obligation statement
(Derivable from the semantic meaning of the locution; obligation).

Madam you will have to/ should/ ought to move your car.

Want statement
(Utterance that expresses the speaker's intentions and desires about the hearer doing something).

I'd like to borrow your notes for a little while.

Suggestory formula
(The request proposition that is phrased as a suggestion).
How about cleaning up the kitchen.

Preparatory or conventionally indirect
(Reference to preparatory conditions such as ability, willingness or the possibility of the act being performed).
Can I borrow your notes?

Strong hint
(Partial reference to relevant elements of the request). *Will you be going home?   (Intent: getting a lift home)*

Mild hint
(No reference to the intended request proposition, hence requiring more demand for contextual analysis on the requestee).
You have been busy here, haven't you? (Intent: getting hearer to clean the kitchen)

Note: The examples are taken from Blum-Kulka et al., (1989) for purposes of clarity.

Appendix 2. Discourse Completion Test

Age:

Gender:

Please respond to each situation as you would in actual conversation.

1. You need a book for your assignment and you know that one of your classmates, Jack has that book. You go and ask him to borrow his book by saying:

   ………………………………………………………………………………..
   ………………………………………………………………………………..
   ………………………………………………………………………………..
   ………………………………………………………………………………..

2. You are a worker in a company. You have been working there nearly for a year and think that you deserve a raise in your salary. You go to the office of your boss, David Taylor and say to him:

   ………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………..
   ………………………………………………………………………………
   ……………………………………………………………………………….

3. You are a teacher and you are supposed to be in a speaking jury for an oral exam in the afternoon session tomorrow, but you have a sore throat and want a substitute teacher for your place, so ask one of your colleagues, Abby Allan, to substitute for you in the oral exam, by saying:

   ………………………………………………………………………………
   ……………………………………………………………………………….
   ………………………………………………………………………………..
   ………………………………………………………………………………

4. You lent some money to your close friend, Jane two weeks ago. She was supposed to repay it to you in a week, but didn't. You need some money urgently, so ask for it by saying:

   ………………………………………………………………………………..
   ……………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………Karagöz……