Research Article

Modifications in L2 Requests: A Study on L2 Turkish

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study aims to enhance understanding of pragmatic development among L2 learners studying the target language in L2 contexts, who interact daily with L1 speakers outside the classroom, navigating pragmatic features and sociocultural norms essential for successful communication. The research investigates the similarities and differences between L2 learners and L1 speakers regarding their internal and external modifications of requests, as well as the role of exposure to L2 input and interaction with L1 speakers in pragmatic development. Data were collected from L2 Turkish learners in Türkiye and L1 speakers using a Discourse Completion Test. Findings indicate that L2 learners differ from L1 speakers in their use of certain internal modification elements, and in employing complex external modifications, which may be attributed to limited social interaction with L1 speakers. These insights have important implications for L2 teaching and the development of pragmatic competence.

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Introduction

Students studying abroad in a second language (L2) have to interact with first language (L1) speakers while achieving daily tasks such as buying something or ordering food. During these interactions, they may face some challenges, largely due to sociocultural differences. These challenges include achieving politeness, navigating indirectness in speech acts, and understanding appropriate ways to conclude conversations, all of which reflect broader cultural variations. To avoid communication breakdowns, it is essential for students to grasp the communication norms and sociocultural elements of the TL. Mastery of these aspects is vital for developing pragmatic competence, defined as the ability to use language appropriately in various contexts according to established norms of politeness and effectiveness (Koike, 1989). This involves knowing what to say or avoid saying in specific situations and collaborating effectively with others to meet communicative goals.

In the context of learning Turkish as an L2 in Türkiye, students have numerous opportunities to interact with L1 Turkish speakers in their daily lives. These real-world interactions significantly contribute to students' acquisition of Turkish sociocultural norms, facilitating appropriate language use across different contexts. While extensive research has focused on the speech acts of L2 Turkish learners (e.g., Aksu Raffard, 2018; Altun Alkan, 2019; Bayat, 2017; Durmuş & Kılınç, 2021; Özdemir, 2016; Polat, 2010), there is a notable absence of studies examining internal and external modifications in requests made by L2 learners. Furthermore, little attention has been given to how input exposure and interaction with L1 speakers influence pragmatic development in L2 Turkish learners.

This study aims to fill this gap by investigating how exposure to the TL in L2 communication settings and interactions with L1 speakers affect learners' use of internal and external modifications in their requests. The findings will enhance understanding of politeness and communication strategies across different cultures. By highlighting the role of sociolinguistic factors in communication, this research encourages educators to prioritize cross-cultural competence in their teaching. Importantly, the study emphasizes the critical role of exposure to TL input and engagement with L1 speakers in improving pragmatic skills and fostering effective intercultural communication strategies. Additionally, the findings suggest that learning the TL in an L2 context does not necessarily lead to substantial interaction in the TL. Furthermore, while mastery of the necessary language forms for achieving politeness through complex sentences is emphasized, the study indicates that such mastery alone does not guarantee pragmatic development.

Literature Review

Interlanguage Pragmatics

Effective communication in a TL requires learners to know what to say in various situations and how to collaborate with others to achieve communicative goals (Taguchi, 2019). This essential aspect of language learning pertains to its pragmatic features. Pragmatics examines the relationship between linguistic tools and their contexts, focusing

on how these structures are used and understood (Taguchi, 2019). This field considers language from both the speaker's and listener's perspectives.

Ellis (1985) describes interlanguage development as occurring in at least three stages:

First stage: Internalization of new forms, or their acquisition.

Second stage: Organization of the relationships between structure and function, which progresses in difficulty; as learners explore the use of new structures in various contexts, they begin to utilize more complex forms.

Third stage: Elimination of unnecessary structures, meaning that changes are made based on insights gained from the first two stages.

In this context, interlanguage is open to continuous development and change, especially considering the socialization process of learners. Therefore, the study of pragmatic competence in interlanguage focuses on how second language learners acquire and apply pragmatic knowledge related to the TL (Kasper & Rose, 1999). Several factors influence the development of interlanguage pragmatics in L2 learners.

A key factor is the amount of interaction in the TL, as engaging with native speakers in natural settings is essential for acquiring sociocultural knowledge and enhancing pragmatic skills. Research shows a positive link between interaction intensity and understanding conventional pragmatic expressions (Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos, 2011). Matsumura (2001) also highlights the beneficial effects of social communication on the use of advising speech acts in L2 contexts.

While grammatical proficiency does not directly translate to pragmatic competence, the interconnectedness of speech acts and sociolinguistic norms suggests a relationship between grammar and pragmatics. Thus, L2 learners' language proficiency significantly affects their ability to produce contextually appropriate utterances (Yates, 2010). Taguchi (2019) emphasizes that learners must understand both linguistic tools and sociocultural norms to achieve L2 pragmatic competence, illustrating the interdependence of pragmatic and structural language knowledge.

Learners often lack awareness of the linguistic tools native speakers use to convey specific meanings (Kasper & Roever, 2005). For example, Yates (2010) notes that native English speakers prefer complex, indirect requests over direct ones, which can confuse L2 learners who may struggle to adjust their language accordingly. A sufficient level of proficiency is necessary for understanding the sophisticated speech act strategies employed by native speakers.

Duration in the L2 context is also vital for pragmatic development. Schauer (2004) found that German learners in England showed increased pragmatic skills with longer stays, while Cheng (2005) found no correlation between time spent in L2 and pragmatic development. Cenoz and Valencia (1996) noted that both Spanish and English learners adapted their strategies based on context, although L2 Spanish learners employed fewer external modification strategies due to lower proficiency.

Matsumura (2001) studied Japanese students in Canada, revealing that they used advising strategies similar to native speakers for peers of equal or lower status but showed no differences with those of higher status, indicating first language transfer. Taguchi (2013) found that English-medium instruction in Japan significantly improved students' use of fixed expressions, showing that effective pragmatic ability relies on both linguistic competence and exposure to authentic communication. Barron (2003) demonstrated that Irish students in Germany improved their proficiency in speech acts through immersion. Similarly, Taguchi, Li, and Xiao (2016) found that authentic L2 communication enhanced request usage and overall pragmatic skills among American students in Beijing.

Requests

Brown and Levinson (1987) define request speech acts as face-threatening acts, which can be categorized as either positive or negative. This classification arises because making a request constrains the listener's freedom of action, threatening their desire to avoid coercion and disturbance, which relates to their negative face (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Consequently, requests are often framed indirectly to mitigate their inherent face-threatening nature. In these indirect requests, speakers convey their desires through various linguistic tools and structures instead of stating them explicitly. However, findings from Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) suggest that indirect strategies are not always perceived as subtle.

The notion that indirectness leads to politeness is widely accepted in speech act classifications and pragmatics research. Brown and Levinson's (1978) politeness model posits that indirect expressions are considered more polite. Searle (1979) emphasized that "indirectness is the primary motivation for politeness," suggesting that a higher degree of indirectness can reduce the listener's perceived obligation while increasing the overall politeness of the interaction. Leech (1983) similarly noted that indirectness gives listeners the option to decline requests, thereby further decreasing their sense of obligation.

Despite this prevailing view, the relationship between indirectness and politeness has faced criticism. Researchers such as Culpeper and Terkourafi (2017) argue that indirectness does not universally equate to politeness across cultures. In collectivist cultures, individual needs often yield to group needs. Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) introduced the concepts of low-context and high-context communication, with Hall (1976) arguing that high-context societies tend to convey messages with minimal articulation, relying heavily on shared knowledge and context. Consequently, countries like Türkiye and Japan, characterized as high-context, often favor indirect communication, while low-context nations like the U.S. prefer direct expression (Yemenici, 1996).

In the study by Otçu and Zeyrek (2008), the politeness marker "lütfen" (please) was found to be infrequently used, appearing more commonly in certain contexts than others. This limited use among Turkish speakers may stem from the perception that "lütfen" suggests a behavior misaligned with the collectivist values of Turkish culture, potentially implying social distance and imposition.

One of the most significant classifications of request speech acts was developed by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain in 1984 through their "Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project" (CCSARP). This project analyzed request usage across eight languages, resulting in a foundational classification. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) categorized request acts into three levels of indirectness:

Direct requests, exemplified by commands or performative verbs, such as "Open the window."

Conventional indirect requests, represented by standardized question forms like "Could you open the window?"

Non-conventional indirect requests, where the speaker hints at the desired action without stating it directly, as in "It's very hot in here."

Later, Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) expanded this classification by adding new components for greater detail. Their coding category guide includes components such as alerting (alerter), request perspective, request strategies (head act), internal modification, and external modification. The internal and external modifications, which are the main focus of this study, are explained in detail below with examples in Turkish extracted from the data belonging to L1 speakers in the current study. For the categories where no examples of use were observed in the study, examples were created based on the English examples provided in the original framework and they were shown with the note "example from not study data"

Internal Modifications: Speakers make various changes within the utterance to reduce the obligation of the request. These modifications are described below.

4.a. Syntactic Downgraders

Interrogatives: The structures "Can I/you…?" in English the request is turned into a question. In Turkish, depending on the context, the English phrase 'Can you...?' can be translated into Turkish using the morpheme -(X)r, as in 'Can you give this to me?' which would translate as 'Bunu bana verir misin?' or 'Bunu bana verebilir misin?'. The two different morphemes carry subtle differences in meaning. The -(X)r suffix in 'verir misin?' suggests the action is feasible or likely to happen and it can sound more casual or immediate. On the other hand, the '-ebil- / -ebil-' suffix in 'verebilir misin?' adds a layer of possibility or ability. This implies a more polite or tentative request, often suggesting that the speaker is inquiring about the listener's capacity or willingness to fulfill the request. Thus, while both forms can refer to "Can you give this to me?", the choice of morpheme affects the tone and the perceived level of formality or politeness in the request.

Negation of a Preparatory Condition: This occurs through the negation of standardized indirect (requesting) expressions shown in the previous section.

"*Beni okula bırakamazsın herhalde.*" [You probably can't take me to school.]

Subjunctive and Conditional: Researchers express that the obligation-reducing nature of these two moods is optional.

"*Hocam ek süre verirseniz ödevimi tamamlamam mümkün.*"[Professor, if you give me extra time, it will be possible for me to finish my homework.]

Aspect: Researchers suggest that the use of continuous aspect serves as a mitigation strategy.

"*Merak ediyorum da evi temizlemeyi düşünüyor musun.*" [I'm wondering, are you thinking of cleaning the house?]

Tense: The past tense only serves as a mitigation when it refers to the present.

"*Hocam merhaba. Rahatsız ediyorum özür dilerim. Sizden ufak bir istekte bulunacaktım.*"[Hello, Professor. I'm sorry to bother you. I **was going to** make a small request.]

4.b. Lexical and Phrasal Downgraders

Politeness Marker: The use of "please", "lütfen" in Turkish.

"*Ablacım yarın çok önemli bir sınavım var ,lütfen bugünlük için sese biraz daha dikkat eder misiniz ?*" [Sis, I have a very important exam tomorrow, could you please be a bit more quiet today?]

Understater: Modifications that function as adverbs to reduce obligation like "biraz" or "az" in Turkish.

"*Hocam iyi günler, vermiş olduğunuz ödevi henüz bitiremedim, mümkünse teslim zamanını **biraz** uzatabilir misisiniz*? [Good day, Professor, I haven't finished the assignment you gave yet. If possible, could you extend the deadline **a bit**?]

Hedges: The speaker uses expressions that do not directly make a request like "bir şekilde".

"***Bir şekilde** evi temizlersin artık.*" [You will clean the house **somehow**] (example not from the study data)

Subjectivizer: The speaker explicitly expresses their subjective opinion phrases such as "korkarım" and "sanırım".

"*Dilekçe yazma konusunda bazı eksiklerim var **sanırım**. Siz bir bakıp yardımcı olur musunuz?.*" [I think I have some shortcomings in writing petitions. Could you take a look and help me?]

Downtoners: The use of propositional modifiers like "acaba"..

"*Pardon, bakar mısınız? Bu pantolonun l bedeni var mı acaba?*" [Excuse me, could you take a look? Does this pants come in size L?]

Cajoler: Persuasion expressions such as "biliyorsun" not directly related to the semantic content of the discourse.

"***Biliyorsun*** *geçen derse katılamadım. Acaba dersin notları sen de varsa boş olduğun vakit bana atabilir misin?*."[**You know** I couldn't attend the last class. If you have the class notes, could you send them to me when you have some free time?]

Appealer: Expressions used at the end of a sentence to capture the listener's attention.

"*Odanı temizle **tamam mı?***" [Clean your room **ok?]**

4.c. Upgraders: These are modifications aimed at increasing the effect of the request.

Intensifier: Words or phrases used to emphasize certain elements of the proposition such as "çok", "gerçekten" or "hakikaten".

"*Bana bu iyiliği yaparsan **çok** süper olur*" [If you do this favor for me, it would be **really** great.]

Commitment Indicator: Expressions that show the speaker's commitment to or certainty about the situation in the proposition. Some examples of this modifier in Turkish are "kesinlikle" and "kesin".

"*Notlarını bana verirsin sen kesin ya*" [You'll definitely give me your notes, right?]

Repetition of Request: Repeating the request using the same words or elaborating further.

"*pardon bakabilir misiniz bu ürünün xl bedeni var mı acaba yardımcı olur musunuz?*" [Excuse me, could you check if this product is available in size XL? Could you help me?]

5) External Modifications (Supportive Moves): These are additional utterances used to reduce or increase the obligation created by the request.

5.a. Modifications that Reduce Obligation

Preparator: The speaker prepares the listener for the request by asking for permission or checking the listener's availability at the moment of speaking. Utterances like "*rica etsem*", "*bir şey rica edecektim*" and "*bir ricam olacaktı*" are some examples of preparators in Turkish

"*Sizden ufak bir **ricam olacaktı.** Eğer mümkünse içteki sol odalarda ses yapmamaya özen gösterebilir misiniz?*" [I **have a small request**. If possible, could you please try to avoid making noise in the left rooms inside?]

Getting a Precommitment: This involves obtaining a commitment from the listener before stating the request to mitigate the chance of rejection. Examples of this modifier are utterances like "*bir şey sorabilir miyim*" or "*bir şey rica edebilir miyim*"

"*hocam **sizden bir şey rica edebilir miyim?** En yakın arkadaşlarımla farklı sınıftayım ve bu benim ders başarımı olumsuz etkiliyor ,rica etsem arkadaşlarımla aynı sınıfta olmama yardımcı olur musunuz?*" [Professor, **may I ask a favor?** I am in

a different class from my closest friends, and this is negatively affecting my academic performance. Could you please help me be in the same class as my friends?]

Grounder: The speaker provides an explanation or reason for the request.

"*Dilekçe yazmam gerekiyor ancak* **tam olarak nasıl yazacağımı bilemiyorum**. *Rica etsem yardımcı olur musunuz?*" [I need to write a petition, but **I'm not sure exactly how to write it.** Could you please help me?]

Disarmer: These are phrases used by the speaker to eliminate the possibility of rejection such as "*kusura bakmayın*", "*özür dilerim*" or "*rahatsız ettim*"

"*hocam merhaba***, kusura bakmayın rahatsız ediyorum**. *vermiş olduğunuz süre içerisinde ödevi tamamlayamadım acaba ek süre verme gibi bir şansınız var mı, teşekkür ederim.*" [Hello, Professor, sorry to bother you. I wasn't able to complete the assignment within the given time. Is there a chance you could extend the deadline? Thank you."]

Promise of Reward: Offering something in return to increase the likelihood of the listener accepting the request.

"*Geçen derste çok hastaydım ve hastaneye gitmek durumunda kaldım.Sanırım sen derste not tutmuşsun rica etsem tuttuğun notları benimle paylaşır mısın* **sen aynı duruma düştüğünde sana yardım edeceğime söz veriyorum**." [I was very sick in the last class and had to go to the hospital. I think you took notes in class, could you please share the notes you took with me? **I promise to help you if you find yourself in the same situation**]

Imposition Minimizer: This modifier indicates mitigating the obligation of the request.

"*Ya hani sen de o tarafa gidiyorsan beni bıraksan*" [Well, if you're going that way, could you drop me off?] (example not from the study data)

5.b. Modifications that Increase Obligation

Insult: "*Ne kadar dağınıksın ya! Şu mutfağı topla artık*" [How messy you are! Please clean up the kitchen already.] (example not from the study data)

Threat: "*oyun hakkını kaybetmek istemiyorsan yemeğini bitireceksin*" [If you don't want to lose your turn, you will finish your food] (example not from the study data)

Moralizing: "*Komşu olmak demek birbirine saygılı olmak demek, biraz sessiz olun lütfen!*" [Being neighbors means being respectful to each other, please be a little quieter!] (example not from the study data)

While there are many studies on requests in both L1 Turkish (Aslan, 2005; Bayraktar Erten, 2014; Güven, 2001) and L2 Turkish (Aksu Raffard, 2018; Altun Alkan, 2019; Durmuş & Kılınç, 2021; Özdemir, 2016; Polat, 2010) there is no study investigating the internal and external modifications in requests by L2 Turkish learners. On the other hand, many studies have explored the use and comprehension of requests in L2 contexts the internal and external modifications in requests in various languages (Al Masaeed, 2017;

Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008; Halupka-Rešetar, 2014; Hassan & Rangaswamy, 2014; Liu, Liao, and Gauss, 2017,

Liu, Liao, and Gauss (2017) investigated the pragmatic competence of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners regarding their use of modifications in requests directed at interlocutors of different social statuses. This study involved 48 freshmen from a private university in central Taiwan, utilizing a Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT) to assess modification usage, alongside a Multiple Choice Discourse Completion Test to evaluate participants' judgments on request appropriateness. Follow-up interviews with 24 volunteers provided additional insights into their perceptions. The findings revealed that participants frequently employed Grounders but showed limited internal modifications due to insufficient pragmalinguistic knowledge and lexical resources. While some awareness of social dynamics was evident, their sociopragmatic performance exhibited minimal variation, with a strong belief that requests should be indirect and polite.

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008) further examined how Greek learners of English modify their requests through internal and external strategies by comparing these learners' strategies with those of British English native speakers, investigating any deviations related to politeness and cultural differences. This research focused on the use of lexical and phrasal downgraders, as well as external supportive moves, to soften requests in power-asymmetrical situations that demand advanced pragmatic skills. Findings indicated that Greek learners' modification patterns differ from those of native speakers, attributed to native language influence, sociopragmatic factors, and differing politeness orientations between the two groups.

Similarly, Halupka-Rešetar (2014) explored internal and external request modifications among English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learners to better understand their request performance. The study analyzed various devices, such as lexical and syntactic downgraders and supportive moves, involving 37 intermediate-level ESP students aged 20-22. Data were gathered through a modified DCT featuring scenarios with varying social power and imposition levels. Results confirmed that these learners exhibited limited variation in both the types and frequency of request modifications, indicating that their pragmatic performance is influenced by pedagogical instruction and remains significantly lower than their overall linguistic skills.

Finally, Al Masaeed (2017) investigated how American university students learning Arabic as a foreign language develop their abilities to make and modify requests in both internal and external contexts. Data were collected from spoken discourse completion tests involving 56 students across four proficiency levels. Contrasting with previous research suggesting that lower-proficiency learners rely heavily on politeness markers, this study found that these students predominantly used grounders. Additionally, advanced learners' methods of mitigating requests diverged from those of native Arabic speakers.

The study by Hassan and Rangaswamy (2014) investigated the use of requests as a speech act among Iranian English language learners in Mysore, India, focusing on internal

and external modifiers. Seventy-two participants completed a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) at three stages: a pre-test, a post-test after three months, and a final post-test after six months. Additionally, a comparison group of 60 native speakers was included. The findings revealed a significant increase in the use of both internal and external modifiers across all phases, indicating that prolonged immersion in an L2 environment positively impacts learners' skills. The study highlights that a longer stay allows learners to more effectively modify their requests to suit different contexts.

Research Aim and Research Questions

This study aims to investigate the extent to which L2 Turkish learners in Türkiye have acquired L2 pragmatics, specifically through the modifications they apply in requests. In this respect, the research question for this study is:

1) How do internal and external modification strategies in requests differ between L1 Turkish speakers and L2 Turkish learners?

Methodology

Research Design/Model

The research design of this study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. A Discourse Completion Test (DCT) is implemented to gather qualitative data on L2 learners and L1 speakers modify requests and then the qualitative data was analyzed statistically. This combination of methods allows for a comprehensive examination of the differences in internal and external modifications in requests.

Publication Ethics

In this study, research and Publication Ethics are complied with. An ethical approval was granted from Hacettepe University on May 4, 2021 with number E-35853172-050-00001564307. Following that all the necessary permissions were obtained from the TÖMERs in sample group and participants were informed about the study as well.

Participants

The study included 42 B2-level learners studying Turkish as a second language at Turkish Language Teaching, Application, and Research Centers (TÖMER) associated with four universities in Türkiye. Additionally, 45 native Turkish speakers enrolled in a Turkish teaching program at a state university were recruited through convenience sampling to serve as a baseline comparison group.

Thus, L2 students were selected at the B2 level to align with the study's objectives. Table 1 presents details on participants' L1, genders, ages, durations and contexts of Turkish learning, and experiences with Turkish outside of TÖMER. Table 1 shows detailed information about L2 learners pariticpating in this study.

Table 1. *L2 Learners In The Sample Group*

Feature	Category	f	%
L1	French	2	4,8
	Arabic	21	50,0
	Uzbek	2	4,8
	Kazakh	6	14,3
	Turkmen	3	7,1
	Persian	3	7,1
	Other	5	11,9
Duration of Turkish Learning	0-6 months	19	45,2
	More than 6 months	23	54,8
Duration of Stay in Türkiye	0-5 months	11	26,2
	6-10 months	20	47,6
	11 months and more	11	26,2
Place of stay in Türkiye	Student house	25	59,5
	Dormitory	6	14,3
	Family house	7	16,7

Data Collection and Analysis

Discourse Completion Test

This study employed a DCT to gather data on speech acts, taking advantage of its efficiency for rapid data collection (Beebe & Cummins, 1996) and its capacity to control contextual factors (Houck & Gass, 1996). A Communication Situations Evaluation Survey was developed, based on the methodologies of Golato (2003) and Rose (2009) to ensure authenticity, with scenarios sourced from various studies on requests and refusals (Altun Alkan, 2019; Beebe et al., 1990; Kılınç, 2019; Martínez-Flor, 2013; Ortaköylüoğlu, 2019; Otçu & Zeyrek, 2008; Özdemir, 2016; Polat, 2010; Safont-Jordà & Portolés-Falomir, 2013; Şanal & Ortaçtepe, 2019; Taguchi et al., 2016). However, this article focuses exclusively on the data related to requests to discuss internal and external modifications in-depth.

40 B2-level L2 Turkish learners evaluated 20 request and 20 refusal scenarios using a 1-5 Likert scale (1 = never happens, 5 = definitely happens). The seven most frequent scenarios for each speech act were selected for the DCT and adjusted based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory to balance variables such as social distance and power/status. An example from the DCT is included below:

Situation: You are on campus. You are asking someone you don't know, who you think is a professor at the university, for the location of the student affairs office (or any place on campus).

You: _____.

DCT was evaluated by five experts to assess its validity and reliability. Based on their feedback, several revisions were made, including: changing the language from "sen" (informal "you") to "siz" (formal "you"), strengthening the context in certain communication scenarios, clarifying the relationship between speakers, providing example situations and responses to assist students, and making adjustments to grammar and expression.

After incorporating the experts' suggestions, the final version of the DCT was piloted with 15 B2-level L2 Turkish students. During the piloting, participants were asked to assess the clarity of the instructions, example scenarios, responses, and communication situations, as well as to report the time taken to complete the test. On average, participants completed the test in 20 minutes. Additionally, two communication scenarios in the DCT were found to be unclear by three participants, leading to revisions at the word level for those specific situations (see Appendix).

The data from DCT were classified according to Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper's (1989) request strategies. The classification was conducted by the first author and an experienced foreign language instructor to ensure reliability. The coders independently classified the strategies. After approximately three weeks, inter-coder reliability was assessed using the formula by Miles and Huberman (1994) (Reliability = agreement / (agreement + disagreement)). The calculation showed a 92% inter-coder reliability, indicating strong agreement between the coders. Subsequently, points of disagreement were identified, discussed based on the literature, and necessary adjustments were made to finalize the data classification. Descriptive statistical analyses were then conducted to calculate frequencies and percentages.

Procedure

Before collecting the data, ethical approval was granted from Hacettepe University Ethics Committee on May, 4, 2021. Data was collected between 2021 and 2022 as part of a larger doctoral study. Since the DCT consists of open-ended items, instructors were instructed to explain and demonstrate examples during class to ensure that L2 students understood how to complete the survey. As the implementation took place during the online education period, the survey was shared with instructors via Google Docs. By the

end of the B2 level, instructors provided the survey link to the students, and there was no time limit for completing it. The same procedure was followed for L1 speakers.

Results

Results of the descriptive statistics regarding the internal modifications in requests by both L2 learners and L1 speakers are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Internal Modifications In The DCT*

Type of Internal Modification	L1 speakers		L2 learners	
	f	%	f	%
conditional clause	5	1,6	1	0,3
past tense (-caktım)	5	1,6	0	0
Understate (biraz)	23	7,3	10	3,2
Downtoner (acaba)	40	12,7	7	2,2
Intensifier (çok)	4	1,3	2	0,6
Cajoler (biliyorsun)	2	0,6	1	0,3
politeness marker (lütfen)	8	2,5	69	21,9
downtoner and past tense	2	0,6	0	0
Understater and politeness marker	3	1	10	3,2
Downtoner and understater	2	0,6	0	0
Intensifier and understater	3	1	0	0

The results in Table 2 indicate that L1 Turkish speakers utilized various internal modification strategies differently compared to L2 Turkish learners, with L1 speakers employing 8 instances of politeness markers (2.5%) while L2 learners used them significantly more frequently, at 69 instances (21.9%). In addition, L1 speakers demonstrated a higher use of downtoners (40 instances, 12.7%) and understaters (23 instances, 7.3%), while L2 learners showed markedly lower frequencies in these categories, using 7 downtoners (2.2%) and 10 understaters (3.2%). Other internal modification types, such as conditional clauses and past tense usage, were also notably less frequent among L2 learners, highlighting the differences in internal modification strategies between the two groups. Some examples from L2 learners are presented below. In terms of politeness marker, the T/V "sen" and "siz" distinction was not examined within the scope of internal modification, and only the lexical marker "lütfen" was included in adherence to the original framework proposed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989).

Politeness marker examples by L2 learners;

(1) *Merhaba hocam bana biraz zaman verebilir misiniz ki ta ben ödevimi bitirmem için? Lütfen.*[Hello teacher, could you give me a little time so that I can finish my homework? **Please**].

(2) *Merhaba arkadaşım nasılsınız. Rica etsem şu gelemedim ders günlerim notlarını bana verebilir misiniz lütfen?*[Hello friend, how are you? Could you give me the notes for the classes I missed. **Please?**]

As can be seen in examples 1 and 2, L2 learners tend to use politeness marker "lütfen" (please) in their requests while requesting something from someone in higher-power, namely the teacher in the first example, and someone equal as in the second example.

Examples to understaters by L2 learners;

(3) *Merhaba hocam, Katılmamı engelleyen bazı durumlar vardı, ödevin teslimi için **biraz ek süre verir misiniz ..!*** [Hello Professor, there were some circumstances that prevented me from participating. Could you please grant me some extra time to submit the assignment?]

Examples to downtoners by L1 speakers;

(4) *Ablacım/abicim merhaba. Bir dilekçe yazmam gerekiyor fakat zorlanıyorum. **Acaba müsaitseniz yardımcı olur musunuz?*** [Hello my dear sister/brother. I need to write a petition, but I'm having some difficulty. If you're available, could you please help me?]

(5) merhaba hocam, bu derse başka bir sınıfta girebilme şansım var mı **acaba**? benim için çok daha verimli olur.yardımcı olabilir misiniz? [Hello Professor, is there a chance for me to attend this course in another class? It would be much more productive for me. Could you please assist me with this?]

Examples to understaters by L1 speakers;

(6) *Merhaba hocam, Katılmamı engelleyen bazı durumlar vardı, ödevin teslimi için **biraz ek süre verir misiniz ..!*** [Hello Professor, there were some situations that prevented me from participating. Could you give me a little extra time for the assignment submission?]

(7) *Ali, yarın sınavım var. Bugünlük **biraz** sessiz ol.* [Ali, I have an exam tomorrow. Be a little quiet today.]

Table 3. *External Modifications In The DCT*

Type of External Modification	L1 speakers		L2 learners	
	f	%	f	%
Not used	82	26	145	46
preparator	23	7,3	12	3,8
grounder	96	30,5	98	31,1
disarmer	3	1	1	0,3
imposition minimizer	1	0,3	0	0
preparator and grounder	70	22,2	19	6
disarmer and grounder	22	7	7	2,2
disarmer and preparator	3	1	2	0,6

preparator, grounder, sweetener	3	1	0	0
promise and grounder	2	0,6	2	0,6
promise and preparator	2	0,6	0	0
Grounder, preparator and promise	1	0,3	0	0
Disarmer and promise	1	0,3	1	0,3
Preparatory and imposition minimizer	1	0,3	0	0
Disarmer and imposition minimizer	1	0,3	0	0
Grounder and imposition minimizer	1	0,3	0	0
Disarmer, preparator, grounder and imposition minimizer	1	0,3	0	0
Sweetener and grounder	0	0	2	0,6
Getting a precommitment and grounder	0	0	3	1

The results in Table 3 reveal distinct patterns in the use of external modification strategies between L1 Turkish speakers and L2 Turkish learners. L1 speakers employed a total of 96 grounders (30.5%) and 23 preparators (7.3%), while L2 learners used 98 grounders (31.1%) and 12 preparators (3.8%). Notably, L1 speakers exhibited more varied combinations, such as the preparator and grounder (70 instances, 22.2%) and disarmer and grounder (22 instances, 7%), compared to L2 learners who showed less diversity in their combinations, using only 19 preparator and grounder instances (6%) and 7 disarmer and grounder instances (2.2%). Additionally, the use of disarmers was minimal, with L1 speakers using 3 (1%) and L2 learners using just 1 (0.3%). These results suggest that while both groups relied heavily on grounders, L1 speakers employed a broader range of external modification strategies.

Examples to external modifications in L1 speakers' requests:

(7) *Hocam* **bu şubenin ders programına uyamıyorum (grounder) rica etsem (preparator)** *istediğim şubeye geçebilir miyim ?[*Professor, I'm having trouble following the schedule for this section; could I please switch to the section I want?

(8): *Merhaba iyi günler* **aşağıda çalışıyordum fakat biraz gürültü geldi evinizden (grounder) rica etsem (preparator)** *birazcık bu konuda dikkatli olur musunuz?* [Hello, good day. I was working downstairs, but there was a bit of noise coming from your place. Could you please be a little more careful about this?]

(9) **Pardon rahatsız ediyorum (disarmer)** ama bir dilekçe yazmam gerekiyor da bana bu konuda yardımcı olur musunuz ? [Sorry to bother you (disarmer), but I need to write a petition. Could you help me with this?"]

Examples to L2 learners:

(10) *Merhaba Mr.Müdür. sınıf değiştirmek istiyorum* **çünkü arkadaşlarımı bulmak istiyorum (grounder)** [Hello Mr. Principal. I want to change classes because I want to find my friends]

(11) ***Sınav var(grounder)*** *gürültü istemiyorum, lütfen*.[There is an exam. I don't want noise. Please]

(12) **Rica etsem (preparator)** biraz sessiz olur musun odaklanamıyorum yarın önemli bir sınavım var [Could you please be a little quiet (preparator), I can't focus, I have an important exam tomorrow.]

Discussion

Based on the findings presented in above, there are notable differences between the two groups regarding the internal modification elements used in their requests. L1 Turkish speakers employed the downtoner "acaba" (possibly) more frequently than L2 learners. Although the difference is less for the understater "biraz" (a little, a bit), L1 speakers still used it more than L2 learners. This may reflect differing perceptions of politeness across languages, suggesting that L2 learners did not mitigate their requests with understaters or downtoners as L1 speakers did. Conversely, L2 speakers utilized the politeness marker "lütfen" (please) significantly more than L1 speakers. This aligns with Faerch and Kasper's (1989) findings, which noted that L2 learners favor "please" for its dual role as both an illocutionary force indicator and a transparent mitigator, adhering to Grice's (1975) principle of clarity through explicit expression. Thus, it can be argued that L2 learners seek to achieve politeness in the most overt manner to avoid misunderstandings.

The infrequent use of politeness markers by L1 Turkish speakers can be attributed to various cultural factors inherent in Turkish communication, as suggested by Otçu and Zeyrek (2008). In their study investigating the internal and external modifications in requests among Turkish EFL learners, they found that these learners rarely employed the politeness marker "lütfen." Researchers propose that this limited use arises from the perception that "lütfen" signifies behavior that is inconsistent with the collectivist values central to Turkish culture. In other words, using "lütfen" may be seen as creating unnecessary social distance or imposition, which contradicts the community-oriented nature of interpersonal interactions in Türkiye.

This argument is further supported by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008), who observed that Greek learners of English similarly underutilize politeness markers due to negative transfer from their own language, which also operates within a collectivist framework. Just as politeness markers are not conventionalized in Greek (Sifianou, 1992, cited in Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008), it can be claimed that they lack standardization in Turkish as well. Consequently, this cultural context may lead L1 Turkish speakers to refrain from using politeness markers like "lütfen" as frequently as their L2 counterparts, who may feel less constrained by these cultural norms and therefore employ such markers more liberally in their requests.

Findings related to external modification elements indicate that L1 Turkish speakers construct long and complex sentences by using multiple external modification expressions together. Consequently, the difficulty L2 learners experience in employing such multi-layered external expressions may stem from their insufficient pragmatic knowledge or language proficiency. Despite being at B2 level, these learners may still

struggle to create these complex sentences. This may be due to learners' insufficient pragmalinguistic knowledge as suggested by Kasper and Roever (2005) who state that L2 learners often have a limited understanding of the linguistic tools native speakers use to convey specific meanings. Yates (2010) also supports this finding, suggesting that L2 learners often perceive such expressions as overly advanced or complex, making it challenging for them to adjust the wording and syntax to mitigate the imposition of requests.

Moreover, this issue can be explained in relation to the stages of interlanguage development identified by Ellis (1985). According to Ellis (1985) L2 learners must internalize new structures, which involves exploring their use in various contexts and eliminating unnecessary ones. Consequently, the difficulties faced by L2 learners in this study when using long and complex external modification sentences may stem from their limited engagement in communicative settings and interactional practices outside the classroom. This lack of interaction hinders their progress in reaching the necessary developmental stages. Interaction with L1 speakers is crucial for interlanguage pragmatic development (Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos, 2011).

On the other hand, the finding that both groups favored the same types of external modifications, primarily grounders and preparators, indicates that L2 Turkish learners have effectively acquired the pragmatics of Turkish regarding appropriate supportive moves in specific contexts. This outcome can be explained by the immersive nature of studying the TL in an L2 environment, providing learners with substantial exposure to TL input even if they do not interact with L1 Turkish speakers. This result is consistent with the study by Hassan and Rangaswamy (2014), which similarly demonstrated that immersion in an L2 context positively affects the use of internal and external request modifications. In this respect, it can be argued that although L2 learners differed from L1 speakers in certain aspects, such as the use of politeness markers and the variation of external modifications in their requests, they still acquired Turkish pragmatics to some extent.

Liu et al. (2017) found that EFL learners frequently utilized grounders but struggled with internal modifications due to limited pragmalinguistic knowledge. This reflects a broader trend observed in the current study, where L2 learners of Turkish also exhibited challenges in forming complex external modifications. The shared difficulty in internal modifications suggests a common barrier related to the learners' pragmatic development, highlighting the need for targeted pedagogical approaches to enhance their pragmatic abilities.

Halupka-Rešetar (2014) further emphasized the limited variation in request modifications among intermediate ESP learners, linking their pragmatic performance to the influence of pedagogical instruction. This is consistent with the current study's findings that L2 learners' usage of multiple external modification strategies is constrained, likely due to insufficient exposure to communicative contexts outside the classroom.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the pragmatic development of L2 Turkish learners in comparison to L1 Turkish speakers, particularly regarding their use of internal and external modification strategies in requests. The findings reveal significant differences between the two groups, particularly in the employment of politeness markers and various internal modifications. L1 speakers mostly utilized downtoners and understaters, which suggests that their understanding of politeness is deeply rooted in indirectness in cultural norms. In contrast, L2 learners relied heavily on the explicit politeness marker "lütfen," (please) highlighting their inclination to seek clarity and avoid misunderstandings in their interactions. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of sociolinguistic factors in shaping communication strategies. While both groups favored grounders and preparators as external modification strategies, L2 learners demonstrated less variety and complexity in their requests. This may be attributed to limited linguistic competence and insufficient engagement in interaction with L1 speakers, ultimately hindering their ability to navigate complex social contexts effectively.

Suggestions

The findings from this study have significant implications for L2 teaching and learning, particularly in the area of pragmatics. The differences between L1 Turkish speakers and L2 learners in the use of internal and external modification elements highlight the challenges that learners face in acquiring culturally and contextually appropriate communication strategies. While L2 learners appear to favor more overt politeness markers like "lütfen" (please), they struggle with the use of downtoners and multi-layered external modifications due to limited pragmalinguistic knowledge and insufficient interaction with native speakers. This finding highlights the need for L2 pedagogical approaches to prioritize pragmatic competence alongside grammatical proficiency. Specifically, instructional strategies should include explicit teaching of internal and external modification techniques, particularly through authentic, context-rich materials that allow learners to practice requests in varied communicative situations. Additionally, fostering opportunities for interaction with L1 speakers, either through direct communication or immersive experiences, could accelerate learners' acquisition of pragmatic subtleties. Given the challenges observed in the current study, targeted pedagogical interventions that focus on increasing learners' awareness of politeness strategies and providing practice in using them in naturalistic contexts would be essential in helping L2 learners achieve greater communicative competence in the TL.

This study had several limitations. Firstly, data on requests were collected solely through DCTs. Future research could benefit from gathering data from real communication settings to capture more authentic interactions. Additionally, incorporating self-reports or interviews could provide insights into learners' perceptions of their pragmatic knowledge and performance. Furthermore, this study focused on a specific proficiency level of students; thus, expanding the participant pool to include various proficiency levels, age groups, or backgrounds could enhance the findings. Exploring different contexts, such as academic, social, or professional settings, would also provide a broader understanding of pragmatic use. A longitudinal study design could be employed to track changes in

pragmatic development over time, and examining cultural variations across diverse L1 backgrounds may offer further valuable insights into the complexities of pragmatic competence.

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Appendix

KONUŞMA TAMAMLAMA TESTİ

Aşağıda birinden bir şey istemeniz beklenen 7 durum verilmiştir. Bu durumların içinde olduğunuzu hayal ederek bu durumlarda ne söyleyeceğinizi her durumun altındaki "Siz: _____" bölümlerine yazınız. Yanıt için fazla düşünmeden, aklınıza ilk gelen cümleyi veya cümleleri yazınız (Birden fazla cümle yazabilirsiniz).

Örnek:
Durum: Hastaneye gitmeniz gerekiyor. Kendinizi iyi hissetmediğiniz için arabası olan yakın bir arkadaşınızdan sizi hastaneye götürmesini istersiniz. Ne/Nasıl söylersiniz?

 Siz: *Selam Serap! Naber nasılsın? Hastaneye gitmem gerekiyor da beni götürebilir misin?*

Durum: Kampüstesiniz. Tanımadığınız, üniversitede çalışan bir hoca olduğunu düşündüğünüz birine öğrenci işlerinin yerini (ya da kampüste herhangi bir yeri) soruyorsunuz.

 Siz: *Affedersiniz, öğrenci işlerinin nerede olduğunu biliyor musunuz?*

Durum 1:

Bir giyim mağazasındasınız. Bir satış danışmanından/görevliden beğendiğiniz bir pantolonun mağazada S/M/L/XL bedeninin olup olmadığını kontrol etmesini istiyorsunuz. Ne/Nasıl söylersiniz?

 Siz: _____

Durum 2:

Bir lokantada yemek yiyorsunuz. Masanızda peçete yok. Garsondan size peçete getirmesini istiyorsunuz. Ne/Nasıl söylersiniz?

 Siz: _____

Durum 3:

TÖMER'de en yakın arkadaşlarınız sizden farklı bir sınıfta. Bu nedenle, siz de o sınıfa geçmek istiyorsunuz ve bunu TÖMER müdürüne söylüyorsunuz. Ne/Nasıl söylersiniz?

Siz: _____

Durum 4:

Bir dilekçe yazmanız gerekiyor ancak zorlanıyorsunuz. TÖMER'de çalışan ve aranızın iyi olduğu bir sekreterden/memurdan size yardım etmesini istiyorsunuz. Ne/Nasıl söylersiniz?

Siz: _____

Durum 5:

Samimi olduğunuz üst komşunuz çok fazla gürültü yapıyor ve ertesi gün önemli bir sınavınız var. Komşunuzdan sessiz olmasını istiyorsunuz. Ne/Nasıl söylersiniz?

Siz: _____

Durum 6:

Hasta olduğunuz için bir derse katılamadınız. Aranızın iyi olduğu bir sınıf arkadaşınızın düzenli olarak derslere katıldığını ve not tuttuğunu biliyorsunuz. Arkadaşınızdan ders notlarını istiyorsunuz. Ne/Nasıl söylersiniz?

Siz: _____

Durum 7:

Bir dersten ödeviniz var ve ödevi bitiremediniz. Bu derste çok fazla devamsızlık yaptığınız için dersin hocasını pek tanımıyorsunuz. Ödevin teslimi için dersin hocasından size ek süre vermesini istiyorsunuz. Ne/Nasıl söylersiniz?

Siz: _____