

THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

STRATEGIC COMPETENCE: EVALUATING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE (EFL) LEARNER AUTONOMY IN AN INTERCULTURAL
ENVIRONMENT

M.A. IN TEFL PROGRAMME
PROJECT

Burak ŐENEL

İSTANBUL, JANUARY 2011

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(EFL) LEARNER AUTONOMY IN AN INTERCULTURAL ENVIRONMENT**

This project has been found adequate and successful in terms of quantity and quality as a Graduation Project.

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Advisor of the Project

.....

Member of the Commission

ÖZET

STRATEJİK YETERLİLİK: İNGİLİZCE YABANCI DİL ÖĞRENCİLERİ OTONOMİSİNİN KÜLTÜRLER ARASI ÇEVRE İÇİNDE DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ

Burak Şenel

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Programı

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Bu çalışma Türkiyede İstanbul ilinde İngilizce yabancı dilini öğrenmek amacıyla üniversitelerin hazırlık programlarında eğitim alan öğrencilerin karşılaştığı problemleri, iletişimsel, özellikle stratejik yeterlilik hususlarındaki eksikliklerinin dil edinimlerindeki etkilerini daha iyi anlayabilmek için yapılmıştır. Bu çalışma İngilizceyi bir yabancı dil olarak ileri düzeyde konuşabilme yetisi olan ve dil bigisi yeterliliği hususunun daha düşük seviyedeki öğrencilere kıyasla daha az derecede sorun teşkil ettiği öğrenciler üzerinde uygulanmıştır. Bu çalışmanın genişliği sosyokültürel yeterlilik konusu ile sınırlıdır. Ayrıca, stratejik yeterliliğin özellikle sosyal dil yetisinin yetersiz olduğu özel durumlarda nasıl önemli bir durum teşkil ettiğini anlatmaktadır. Araştırmacı günlük iletişimlerde sosyal dile ait yeterliliğin ve stratejik yeterliliğin önemini belirtmeye çalışmış ve aynı zamanda bu konulardaki yeterliksizliklerden doğabilecek sorunlara pedagojik açıdan birtakim öneriler getirmiştir. Elde edilen sonuçlar dil öğretimi, materyal planlamaları ve öğretmenlerin derslere hazırlanmaları konularında yapılabilecek araştırmalarda kullanılabilir. Veri toplamada kullanılan yöntemler, anketler, ve sınıf gözlemlerinden oluşmuştur.

AnahtarKelimeler: İletişimsel Yeterlilik, İletişime Dayalı Dil Öğretimi, Sosyal Dil Yeterliliği, Diller Arası Pragmatikler, Diller Arası Yanlış Transferler, Konuşmada Davranış Biçimleri, Kibarlık, Yüzde Gözlemlenebilen Davranışlar, Özürdileme, Rica etme, Ret etme.

ABSTRACT

STRATEGIC COMPETENCE: EVALUATING EFL LEARNER AUTONOMY IN AN INTERCULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Burak Şenel

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This project attempts to address the problems that Turkish university students face in order to better understand the effects of lacking crucial communicative competence knowledge of English, particularly strategic competence, in their EFL courses at a university preparatory school in Istanbul, Turkey. The focus of the study is on advanced level students, for whom grammatical competence is less of an issue. The scope of the study is limited to considering sociolinguistic competence and how strategic competence comes into play in situations where sociolinguistic competence may be insufficient. The researcher not only aims to consider the importance of sufficient sociolinguistic and strategic competence in a variety of situations but also discusses some ways to address these issues from a pedagogical standpoint. The findings may have potential implications for research on classroom instruction, materials design, and teacher preparation. Data was collected by means of questionnaires and classroom observations.

Keywords: Communicative competence, communicative language teaching, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, interlanguage pragmatics, negative transfer, speech acts, politeness, face, apologies, requests and refusals

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ABBREVIATIONS

English as a Foreign Language	:	EFL
Native Language	:	L1
Second Language Acquisition	:	SLA
Target Language	:	L2
Native Speaker	:	NS
Non-Native Speaker	:	NNS
Discourse Completion Test	:	DCT
Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test	:	MDCT
Cross-cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns	:	CCSARP
Communication Strategies	:	CS
Face-threatening Act	:	FTA
Interlanguage Pragmatics	:	ILP

1. Introduction

This project attempts to assess the problems that Turkish university students face in order to better understand the effects of lacking crucial sociolinguistic and strategic competence in their EFL courses at Koc University preparatory school in Istanbul, Turkey. The focus of the study is on advanced level students, for whom sociolinguistic and strategic aspects of communicative competence are most lacking. Even grammatically advanced learners will not necessarily possess comparable pragmatic competence and may use language inappropriately (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Boxer & Pickering, 1995; Bouton, 1996; Kasper 1997). A particular consideration for many learners leading to the need for effective communication strategies is this lack of sociolinguistic competence. Specifically, lack of sociolinguistic competence can affect the realization of the speech act, prompting the learner to compensate through strategic competence. This study lies in the field of interlanguage pragmatics (ITP). The analytical approach taken in this study is primarily based on speech act theory, as well as Brown and Levinson's face theory (1987) and Leech's politeness principle (1983) (See sections 2.6 and 2.7). Apologies, requests, and refusals are the speech acts considered in the questionnaire.

This study adopts both a qualitative approach and a quantitative approach. The data are based on the results of a Multiple-Choice Discourse Completion Test (MDCT) and classroom observations. The researcher not only aims to point out the importance of having sufficient sociolinguistic and strategic competence but also discusses some ways to address these issues from a pedagogical standpoint. In order to be able to examine these aspects, the researcher aims to find answers to the following research questions in the following section.

1.1 Research Questions

- How do these advanced-level students who study at the Koc University prep school differ from the native speakers of American English who participated in the study in their perception of request, apology, and refusal speech acts?
- What types of speech act realization strategies do these Turkish students in EFL preparatory courses at Koc University use in familiar situations and in situations that they likely have not encountered previously?
- To what extent can we develop these students' strategic competence from the pedagogical perspective?

2. Background and Literature Review

As previously mentioned, the main concern of this study is to assess the problems that these Turkish preparatory students face in order to better understand the effects of lacking crucial sociolinguistic and strategic competence in English, in their EFL courses at Koc University preparatory school in Istanbul, Turkey. The researcher will present a summary of topics related to the study including competence, communicative competence, pragmatic competence, interactional competence, branches of communicative competence, interlanguage pragmatics and language transfer, the communicative acts of request, apology and refusal, and teaching communicative strategies in EFL.

2.1 Competence

According to Noam Chomsky, *competence* refers to the abstract knowledge a native speaker has about the linguistic system of his/her language. Chomsky (1965: 3) wrote:

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker listener in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitation, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance.

Of particular importance to the present study are those views which suggested the expansion of the notion of competence to include the sociocultural aspects of language, including Austin (1962), Searle (1969, 1975), Halliday (1978) and Hymes (1966, 1972). Chomsky's view of competence, according to Hymes, was inadequate to account for the relationship between what is said and what is really meant. He stated that "the controlling image is of an abstract, isolated individual, almost an unmotivated cognitive mechanism, not, except incidentally, a person in a social world" (1972: 272). Hymes, therefore, questioned Chomsky's view of competence and suggested that competence was dependent upon not only knowledge, but also use. Hymes also rejected the notion of a homogeneous community with perfect knowledge and contrasted it with evidence of differential competence within a heterogeneous speech community. Hymes' dissatisfaction with Chomsky's theory can be summarized in one simple statement, "There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless" (1972: 278). In accordance with this, the next section focuses on the term "*communicative competence*" in Hymes' terms.

2.2 Communicative Competence

The term *communicative competence* was coined by Dell Hymes in 1966, to address the inadequacy of Noam Chomsky's distinction between *competence* and *performance*.

Communicative competence has been defined and described in many ways since then. According to H.G. Widdowson (1989:135):

Communicative competence is not a matter of knowing rules for the composition of sentences and being able to employ such rules to assemble expressions from scratch as and when occasion requires. It is much more a matter of knowing a stock of partially pre-assembled patterns, formulaic frameworks, and a kit of rules, so to speak, and being able to apply the rules to make whatever adjustments are necessary according to contextual demands. Communicative competence in this view is essentially a matter of adaptation, and rules are not generative but regulative and subservient.

Brown (1987:199) offers a more concise definition, “Communicative competence, then, is that aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings within specific contexts.” Part of this definition indicates that meaning is also tied to the interaction of the participants. Thus meaning is often ambiguous and has to be clarified. Additionally, this definition supports the idea that language is always contextual.

The most frequently cited models of communicative competence are those of Canale&Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; Bachman, 1990; and Bachman & Palmer, 1996. In all models, there is generally a difference assumed based on what language is (rules, syntax, morphology, and phonology for example) and what language does (use according to social norms and speaker intention). This is reflected in the initial model of Canale and Swain(1980:6) who proposed that communicative competence “refer to relationship and interaction between grammatical competence, or knowledge of the rules of grammar, and sociolinguistic competence, or the

knowledge of the rules of language use.” After later reflection, they added a third component, strategic competence, which allows speakers to cope when language skills are insufficient for communication. Canale (1983) refined the model, adding discourse competence; therefore, Canale’s final framework lists four main components: grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Based on the Canale and Swain model, Bachman and Palmer continued to reflect on the components of communicative competence, and Bachman (1990) proposed a model of *communicative language ability*. In 1996, the revised Bachman model divided competence into "organizational competence," which includes both grammatical and discourse (or textual) competence, and "pragmatic competence," which includes both illocutionary competence (knowledge of the pragmatic conventions for carrying out appropriate language functions) and sociolinguistic competence (knowledge of sociolinguistic rules of appropriateness to a given context). The next section focuses on the pragmatic and interlanguage competence.

2.3 Pragmatic Competence and Interactional Competence

In essence, Bachman’s pragmatic competence is a combination of Canale’s sociolinguistic and strategic competencies, with the idea in mind that, while these competencies can be discussed and, to a certain extent, analyzed separately, they are quite often used by the language user simultaneously and are therefore intertwined. This notion of intertwined or overlapping models has also been pursued by Celce-Murcia et al (1995) with the coining of the term *interactional competence*, the ability to comprehend and produce all significant speech acts and speech act sets, reflecting a speaker’s knowledge of language rules and interaction principles which come

into play in meaning negotiation in real life contexts, that is within a particular social setting and culture.

In one sense, Bachman and Celce-Murcia's models might perhaps be a more accurate representation of the fluidity and overlapping nature of competence, particularly as they mirror to some extent the scope of this paper in considering sociolinguistic and strategic competence side by side. For purposes of discussing the results of the data, however, Canale's framework allows for a clearer discussion of the results, for example in distinguishing speech acts themselves from L1 cultural influences that lead to them and in relating results of this study to similar studies that have used Canale's model. For this reason, Canale's four-part framework will serve as the primary guide for this paper and will be discussed in more detail in the next section on the branches of communicative competence.

2.4 Branches of Communicative Competence

As mentioned, communicative competence is made up of four areas: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. All are part of effective communication.

2.4.1 Grammatical Competence

Grammatical competence is knowing how to use the grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and phonology of a language, particularly the rules. Although not the focus of this study and not often discussed when considering communicative competence, grammatical competence is an important part of communicative competence. As Canale and Swain (1980:5) respond to the Hymes statement mentioned previously, "Just as Hymes was able to say that there are rules of

grammar that would be useless without rules of language use, so we feel that there are rules of language use that would be useless without rules of grammar.”

2.4.2 Discourse Competence

The division between grammatical competence and *discourse competence* is between sentence-level grammar and relationships above the sentence level. *Discourse competence* is knowing how to construct longer stretches of language to create coherent form and cohesive meaning. Cohesion refers to linking utterances using structural devices such as synonyms, pronouns, and conjunctions. Coherence deals with relationships among different meanings in the text, which may even be literal or implied. Regarding the language learner, Cook (1989:49) writes that in order to an effective participant in discourse he or she “needs to be able to identify what type of discourse he or she is involved in, and predict how it will typically be structured.”

2.4.3 Sociolinguistic Competence

Each of the components of communicative competence affects and is affected by the other components. This study, however, is concerned primarily with the sociolinguistic and strategic aspects of competence and how the two relate, so the final two components of communicative competence will be dealt with in more detail. *Sociolinguistic competence* is knowing how to use and respond to language appropriately, in a specific sociocultural context. This component takes into account the contextual relationships of language. The appropriateness or interpretation of any message and its success depend largely on the results the speaker/hearer obtains, a message filtered through sociocultural perspective. In brief, communication is not just an event, something that happens; it has a function, a particular message to communicate. Since language

and culture are connected, communication can be affected negatively when speakers lack relevant pragmatic competence. Real life communication is never culture free. This type of competence requires an understanding of the social context in which language is used: the roles of the participants, the information they share, and the function of the interaction (Savignon 1983). Speakers who lack sociolinguistic competence are often frustrated by miscommunication with native speakers and other L2 speakers of English and are often confused by the negative reactions to their attempts at communication. As Nelson et al (2002: 164) affirm, "While native speakers often forgive the phonological, syntactic, and lexical errors made by L2 speakers, they are less likely to forgive pragmatic errors. Native speakers typically interpret pragmatic errors negatively as arrogance, impatience, rudeness, and so forth."

2.4.4 Strategic Competence

Concerning the background of *strategic competence*, Dörnyei and Scott (1997) in their article *Communication Strategies in a Second Language: Definitions and Taxonomies* trace the development of the term "communication strategy" and state that Selinker was the first to coin the term, but only discussed these strategies generally. In the same year as Selinker, Savignon published about the importance of these strategies in communicative language teaching and called them "coping strategies." However, Tarone became important in the 1980s with a more complete description of communication strategies, which were then included in Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence. Then, Faerch and Kasper (1983) produced an edited volume called *Strategies in Interlanguage Communication*, which pulled together previous studies in the field for a clearer understanding of strategic competence. In Canale and Swain's terms (1980: 30), strategic competence can be summarized as follows: "...the verbal and

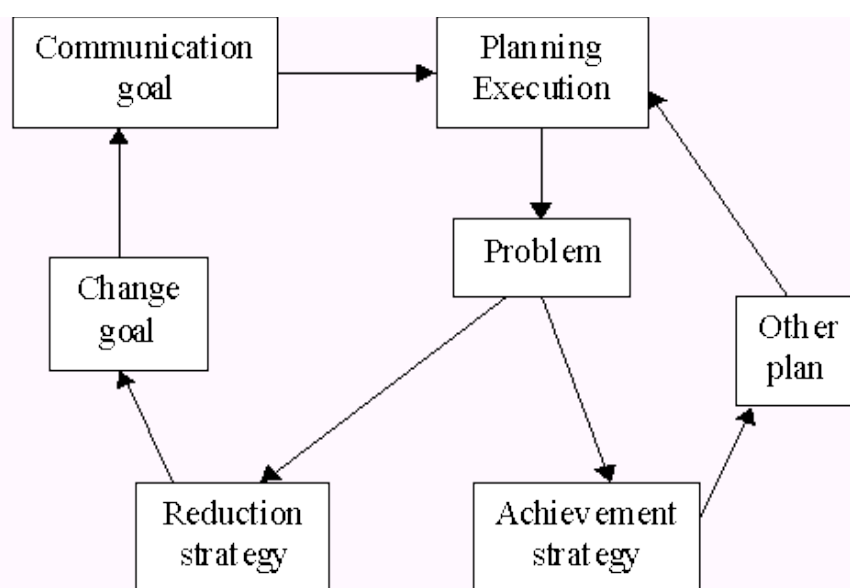
non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence.”

Strategic competence therefore currently refers to the speaker’s ability to use communication strategies such as paraphrase, circumlocution, literal translation, lexical approximation, and mime to get the message across and to compensate for limited knowledge or the interference of factors such as being distracted or tired (Canale and Swain 1980). Although both native and non-native speakers use communication strategies, non-native speakers use them more frequently to cope with problems encountered while attempting to speak a foreign language. Successful language learning is not only a matter of developing grammatical, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence but also strategic competence, as it allows a learner to compensate for deficiencies in other areas. This last component, strategic competence, appears to be one of the most important in spoken communication because of this compensatory function although it is not addressed as often as the others. Furthermore, Nyikos and Oxford (1993:11) claim "strategic competence fosters competence in grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and psycholinguistic areas.” Thus, strategy research permeates all areas of EFL learning, if we recognize that learning is multidimensional.

2.4.4.1 Types of Communication Strategies

Dörnyei and Scott (1997) state in their article that the data in most studies of communication strategies have been classified as discussed by Tarone (1977) and are generally divided into reduction strategies and achievement strategies. These types were also termed by Corder (1981) as message adjustment strategies and resource expansion strategies. Reduction strategies

(message adjustment), according to Dörnyei and Thurrell (1991), involves the tailoring of one's message to one's resources. It is a kind of risk avoidance. If a learner cannot achieve his/her goal, the goal is changed. In the other type, achievement strategies (resource expansion), the learner risks failure and tries to stay in the conversation. Ideally, achievement strategies are more useful and potentially more successful. As Nakatani (2005:81) argues, achievement strategies are “learners' active behavior in repairing and maintaining interaction,” while reduction strategies, “reflect learners' negative behavior as they try to avoid solving communication difficulties.” Basically, what happens in the communication process is straightforward. We have a communicative goal, and we set out to make a plan and execute it. If we encounter a problem, we have two choices. We can try to avoid the problem by adopting a reduction strategy, adjusting our ends to our means. On the other hand, we can keep our goal but develop an alternative plan by using an achievement strategy, or adjusting our means to our ends. A demonstration of these strategies is found in the figure below, adapted from a well-known study by Faerch and Kasper (1983).



2.4.4.1.1 Reduction Strategies

Reduction strategies in particular may include message abandonment strategies, first-language-based strategies, interlanguage-based strategies, and false starts. McGillick (1993) in his paper refers to them as non-productive. For example, he considers miming, pointing, avoiding specific topics and shifting from one topic to another as nonproductive strategies because they lead to the speaker's dropping out of the conversation and abandoning the desired message. The learner simply gives up on communicating his/her actual message. We may simply avoid the topic completely or drop any politeness markers that we are not competent in using, which can lead to pragmatic failure. Of course such failures are not always so serious, but they can be when they cause the hearer to have inaccurate perceptions of our character.

2.4.4.1.2 Achievement Strategies

Some particular achievement strategies include help-seeking, modified interaction, modified output, time-gaining, maintenance, and self-solving strategies. McGillick (1993) refers to this type as productive and includes the use of synonyms, paraphrasing, coining words and borrowing from other languages. They are called productive because they are used by learners to stay in the conversation although they do involve more immediate risk. Reduction or avoidance strategies both have a place in communication. However, for students to increase their ability to communicate in unfamiliar contexts and to take risks, so teachers should be more concerned with teaching achievement or expansion strategies. Using such strategies, particularly achievement strategies, is a sign of strategic competence and can improve intercultural communication. Strategic competence allows language users to cope with problematic communicative situations and to keep the channel of communication open. This issue is especially relevant in an EFL

environment, where learning is more difficult to contextualize for the learner, as opposed to an ESL environment, where context is provided every day. Communicating spontaneously and effectively with confidence and guessing is essential to fluency and needs to be encouraged.

2.5 The Relationship Between Sociolinguistic and Strategic Competence

Canale stresses that these four components of communicative competence, or communicative ability, are “levels of analysis” that interact with each other in some way and only provide a starting point for creating a working model, as was addressed somewhat in the discussion of pragmatic and interactional competence. Such a modular framework was also held by Lado (1957, 1964) and Carroll (1972) and has been adapted by others, such as the Bachman and Palmer (1996) model. Strategic competence involves the skills needed to handle communication problems in these other areas, allowing speakers to get their message across despite obstacle such as a lack of sociolinguistic competence. It therefore encompasses the “dynamic” nature of communication, which Savignon (1983) introduced and several others have alluded to. Those who have well-developed strategic competence will be able to use their proficiency in other competencies to the fullest in these dynamic social environments. Although many researchers are content with viewing social strategies as merely devices for "getting along" in social situations such as "asking questions for clarification or verification, asking for help, and collaborating with others via language," these social strategies are often much more complex than we realize (Hsiao & Oxford 2002: 369). If language can be considered a tool which human beings use to engage in social acts then exploring other social factors may lead to a more complete understanding of how strategies develop (Savignon&Sysoyev 2002). While Cohen (1995) generally supports the "getting along in the target culture" view of social strategies as well, he also includes the idea of

choice. He therefore defines social strategies as "actions which learners choose to take in order to interact with other learners and with native speakers" (Cohen 1995: 2). Following Fantini (2006:12), intercultural communicative competence (which by its nature includes aspects of sociolinguistic and strategic competence) can be defined as "a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself." This grouping of abilities, according to Fantini (2000), includes: awareness, attitudes, skills, knowledge and language proficiency. Seen from this perspective, intercultural communicative competence is a necessary skill for foreign language learners to communicate effectively with speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including developing and nourishing positive relationships.

2.5.1 Strategy Training Activities

As a necessary competence, how can strategic competence be approached in the classroom? As discussed, a consensus is building among language educators that it is a factor common to successful communicative language learners. This consensus is increasingly supported both by descriptive studies as well as interventionist studies (e.g., Vandergrift, 2002; Macaro, 2001; Cohen, Weaver, & Li, 1998) that have demonstrated that learners who use strategies produce better results in their language learning. Whereas early efforts at teaching functions focused primarily on lists of de-contextualized speech functions, more recent efforts are beginning to reflect a more complex understanding of strategic competence and its interaction with other areas of communicative competence that we have gained from research.

Dörnyei and Thurrell (1991) suggest some practical ideas for strategy training which aim at enhancing some aspects of reduction and achievement skills. Their ideas include: fillers, going

off the point, appealing for help and paraphrase and circumlocution. Fillers, according to the writers, are a crucial part of learners' strategic competence. Examples of these fillers range from very short structures (e.g. you know; I mean; well; actually), to what are almost phrases (as a matter of fact; I see what you mean). One way of presenting fillers suggested by Dörnyei and Thurrell is to play authentic recordings for students to note down fillers that they might make use of. Another important aspect of strategic competence according to them is "going off the point," which allows learners to gain control of a topic, and therefore guide the discourse confidently. This way, students will gain a lot of confidence because they know that they can remain in control of the conversation even if something unexpected occurs. Appealing for help can be done through the use of interruptions or asking for clarification or confirmation. The authors in the article also discuss explanation, definitions, and paraphrasing and suggest having students "explain" words or pictures without saying the actual word or name. Paraphrasing is an interpretation of the message and is an important academic skill generally, not only a learning skill. Specific strategies are very important because they give the learner confidence to deal with unexpected situations and facilitate intercultural communication.

2.5.2 Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the study of communicative action in its sociocultural context and is relevant to this study particularly because of the nature of speech acts which will be discussed in detail later. Communicative action includes not only speech acts - such as requesting, greeting, and so on - but also participation in conversation, engaging in different types of discourse, and sustaining interaction in complex speech events. Leech (1983) and his colleague Jenny Thomas (1983) proposed to subdivide pragmatics into a pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic component.

Pragmalinguistics refers to the resources for conveying communicative acts and relational or interpersonal meanings. *Sociopragmatics* was described by Leech (1983) as the sociological interface of pragmatics, referring to the social perceptions underlying participants' interpretation and performance of communicative action. Speech communities differ in their assessment of speaker's and hearer's social distance and social power, their rights and obligations, and the degree of imposition involved in particular communicative acts (Takahashi & Beebe, 1993; Blum-Kulka & House, 1989; Olshtain, 1989). Since pragmatic competence and sociolinguistic competence are often used interchangeably in the literature, despite the differences as discussed above, it is useful to look at the background of pragmatics and then interlanguage pragmatics in particular. As linguistic pragmatics has developed from different philosophical, sociological, and linguistic traditions, pragmatics has been defined in various ways. Representative of the direction of most definitions, Crystal's (1997:301) definition of pragmatics focused on communicative action in its sociocultural context:

Pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication.

Kasper and Rose (2001:2) also pointed out that communicative action consists of not only using speech acts such as requests, refusals and apologies, but also joining in conversation, engaging in various discourse types and being involved in complex speech events.

2.5.3 Interlanguage Pragmatics

Pragmatic ability in a second or foreign language is part of a non-native speakers' (NNS) communicative competence and therefore has to be part of a model of communicative ability

(Savignon 1991). Sociolinguistic competence is part of this pragmatic ability and comprises the ability to use language appropriately according to context. It includes the ability to select communicative acts and appropriate strategies to use depending on the current status of the conversational “contract” (Fraser 1990). Pragmatics concerns both sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. The focus on pragmatic competence in the field of EFL is to help the learner to communicate meaning appropriately in the target language. According to Thomas (1995:22), “making meaning is a dynamic process, involving the negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer, the context of utterance (physical, social, and linguistic) and the meaning potential of an utterance.” Dialogue of cultures is a term introduced by Bakhtin (1981, 1986), a philosopher viewing dialogue as the essence of humanity and mutual understanding. Most recent discussion has emphasized the strong links between language and culture and their relevance for teaching and curriculum design (Valdes, 1986; Byram, 1989; Damen, 1987; Kramsch, 1988, 1993, 1998).

Interlanguage is the type of language produced by second and foreign language learners who are in the process of learning a language. According to Ellis (1985) interlanguage is the systematic knowledge of language which is independent of both the learner’s L1 and L2 system. Before 1970s, interlanguage studies were generally carried out to look at grammatical development of L2 learners. However, with the emergence of the communicative competence approach, interlanguage studies started to focus on the interactional and communicative dynamics of L2 performance. The pragmatic perspective toward the learner language led to the birth of *interlanguage pragmatics* (ILP). Coming primarily from second language acquisition (SLA) and pragmatics, ILP has been defined as “the study of nonnative speakers’ use and acquisition of

linguistic action patterns in a second language (L2)” (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Kasper, 1996). As the main focus of pragmatics is to examine how an utterance meaning is perceived, ILP mainly concerns how non-native speakers differ from native speakers in interpreting and producing a speech act in the target language, which is also a focus in this study. Early ILP studies mainly focused on learners’ demonstration of illocutionary force and different politeness perceptions. For example, studies such as Bouton (1988, 1993, 1996) found that learners’ cultural background and type of implicature influenced learners’ comprehension of indirect speech acts in particular. ILP researchers also frequently consider contextual distribution of differences, strategies in target language use, linguistic forms used for conveying an idea in the target language, illocutionary meanings and politeness (Blum-Kulka et al, 1989; Kasper, 1992).

2.5.4 Studies of Pragmatic Transfer

All of this relates to transfer as well. Interlanguage pragmatics emphasizes people’s comprehension and production of linguistic action in context. This often involves an EFL environment and transfer. As Thomas (1983) states, L2 learners transfer L1 speech act rules into L2, so they engage in pragmalinguistic failure or their different perceptions about correct linguistic behavior cause sociopragmatic failure. The use of rules of speaking from one’s own native speech community when interacting with members of the host speech community or simply when speaking or writing in a second language is known as sociolinguistic or pragmatic transfer (Wolfson 1989). Kasper focuses on pragmatic transfer and defines it as “the influence exerted by learners’ pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production, and acquisition of L2 pragmatic information” (1992). A look at previous interlanguage research suggests that pragmatic failure may often result in more serious

communicative misunderstandings than grammatical errors, since pragmatic errors may be considered offensive by native speakers instead of simply being regarded as language errors (Thomas 1983). Furthermore, as was mentioned previously, grammatical competence does not imply pragmatic competence, or, in other words, grammatically advanced learners do not necessarily have concomitant pragmatic competence (Rose and Kasper 2001; Barron 2003). For example, Enochs and Yoshitake-Strain (1999) found that TOEFL scores did not correlate with the pragmatic ability of the students they studied. This can be very frustrating for learners who know grammar rules perhaps better even than many native speakers and have an extensive vocabulary but find themselves unable to communicate their ideas effectively on a day-to-day basis.

Many transfer-related studies have looked at speech acts including requests, suggestions, invitations, refusals, expressions of disagreement, corrections, complaints, apologies, expression of gratitude, compliments and indirect answers (Kasper 1992). These cross-cultural examinations were conducted with a view to find out how non-native speakers, due to their L1 influence, differ from native speakers in understanding and realizing a particular speech act. Negative pragmalinguistic transfer has been documented in many studies focusing on speech acts including House and Kasper, 1987; Faerch and Kasper, 1989; Cohen and Olshtain, 1981; Olshtain and Cohen, 1983; Trosborg, 1987; House, 1988; Beebe et al, 1990; Bergman and Kasper, 1993). One of the most influential studies of speech acts has been the project of the Cross-cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) led by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) with the major goal of establishing the similarities and differences between native and non-native speakers' realization patterns of requests and apologies in eight languages.

Such studies of speech act realization have shown that even proficient learners have problems with performance of certain speech acts (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993:63).

2.6 Sociolinguistic Competence and Strategic Competence in EFL Teaching

Although there are some in the EIL (English as an International Language) community who are pushing to separate the teaching of language and culture, the view of teaching culture together with language is still the most widely-held philosophy. It can be traced back to 1957 when Robert Lado published his book *Linguistics across Culture*. For him, culture was “a structured system of patterned behaviour” which included language (Lado, 1957: 52), an idea parallel to the work of Lee Whorf of the 1930’s. Another American linguist who dealt with the teaching of culture was Nelson Brooks whose book *Language and Language Learning* published in 1960 discussed the close relationship between language and culture. Brooks wrote, “Language is the most typical, the most representative, and the most central element in any culture. Language and culture are not separable” (1960: 85). A recent figure who favored the integration of teaching culture in the language classroom was Claire Kramsch. Kramsch (1993:24) argued that as language users, “Every time we say something, we perform a cultural act.” Seen from this perspective, linguistic practice is full of cultural implications. Byram and Fleming (1998:4) warned against trying to separate culture and language when they wrote, “...without the cultural dimension, successful communication is often difficult: comprehension of even basic words and phrases may be partial or approximate, and speakers and writers may fail to convey their meanings adequately or may even cause offence.” Warnings related to other consequences of not teaching culture were issued by other scholars. Milton (1997:16) even went so far as to refer to advanced learners without sociolinguistic competence as “fluent fools,” or learners who may be

otherwise competent but unable to understand the cultural dimension of the English language. Awareness, therefore, of the influence culture and context may have on the learners' behavior will enable them to behave in more informed ways and to avoid being offensive, inappropriate, or socially unacceptable towards native speakers and also toward more culturally-aware second language speakers of English.

Hymes' distinction between language knowledge and ability for language use, as well as his incorporation of sociolinguistic knowledge into the framework of communicative competence, have contributed to many of the discussions of language teaching and testing. The communicative competence model is based on this understanding of the relationship between language and culture and is one of the theories that underlie the communicative language teaching approach. As much as there has already been much debate about linguistic competence and communicative competence in the second and foreign language teaching fields, the outcome has been that communicative competence continues to dominate.

However, only recently have foreign language curricula begun to tackle the more complex issues of the second and third components of communicative competence (sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence). Sociolinguistic and strategic competence each incorporate facets of culture, and the development of these competences is intertwined with the development of cultural awareness. "The exquisite connection between the culture that is lived and the language that is spoken can only be realized by those who possess a knowledge of both" (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999:47). The main arguments for such integrative approach towards culture and language teaching, as stated by Dłaska (2000), include

the following. First, neglecting either language or culture will be to the detriment of the other. Secondly, culture-integrated language teaching teaches meaning negotiation as opposed to speech reproduction. Additionally, topic-based modules in English courses will be more obviously related and coherent. Finally, culture-integrated language teaching may raise learner awareness and reduce ethnocentrism, representing an intellectually challenging source of motivation. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF, 2001) also promotes intercultural competence as a part of language learning.

Strategic competence is the other major component of communicative competence that is not addressed adequately in teaching, and yet is essential. The development of this component, as Dörnyei and Thurrell (1991) suggest, largely determines the fluency and conversational skills of the learner. They also state that teachers are usually unaware of the importance of this component and the activities that lead to training this strategy have hardly been developed. This results in a lack of fluency and conversational skills, which students usually complain about. As Dörnyei and Thurrell (1991: 16) state:

Applied linguists have for some time suggested that communicative competence includes a major component, usually termed strategic competence, the development of which largely determines the learner's fluency and conversational skills. Practising teachers, however, are usually unaware of the significance of this competence, and hardly any activities have been developed to include strategy training in actual language teaching.

Training this type of competence, in particular, helps in developing the learner's confidence when getting into and continuing a conversation. Strategy training, Dörnyei and Thurrell believe, “facilitates spontaneous improvization skills and linguistic creativity” (1991: 22). Learning to utilize these strategies, such as those addressed earlier in this paper, can improve learners' performance. Teachers therefore should teach learners about communicative strategies and how to use them effectively, particularly achievement strategies. This way learners focus on communicating rather than memorizing.

Rose (2000) mentions that there have been some cross-sectional studies and a few longitudinal studies which have investigated the effects of instruction on pragmatic development. Schmidt (1993) for example has explored the role of “conscious awareness” in the acquisition of pragmatic competence. He concludes that the necessary condition for pragmatic learning to happen is attention to pragmatic information. Metacognitive strategies have been shown to increase autonomy among learners (White 1995). Recent studies have also shown the effectiveness of teaching such strategies. In a study done by Nakatani (2005), 62 females taking an EFL course were divided into two groups: a control group and a strategy training group. The first group received only the normal communicative course, while the strategy training group received metacognitive training, with a focus on strategy use. Nakatani found that students in the strategy training group improved on the oral communication tests significantly more than those in the control group. Students in the strategy training group learned to make longer utterances which enriched their abilities to negotiate meaning and maintain the flow of conversation. Opportunities for learning L2 pragmatics in an EFL setting are much more limited and make strategy learning even more important than in an ESL setting. Other interventional studies

(House, 1996; Wildner-Bassett, 1984, 1986, 1994) support that with focused metapragmatic instruction, students can increase their pragmatic ability in EFL environments.

Despite the studies that support the teaching of pragmatics and communicative strategies, many teachers still do not address this aspect of learning. Teachers often do not teach these because they may not be consciously aware of these strategies, and even if they are, teaching guidelines and materials on speech acts are not very common. However, as Graham mentions, “Those teachers who have thought carefully about how they learned a language, about which strategies are most appropriate for which tasks, are more likely to be successful in developing ‘strategic competence’ in their students” (1997: 170).

2.6.1 Speech Act Theory

In the past few decades, studies on production and realization of some speech acts have grown from these social, linguistic and cultural perspectives that have been discussed here. Very briefly, Speech Act Theory tries to explain how language users achieve intended actions and how hearers deduce intended meanings from what is said. Among scholars, Austin (1962) was one of the earliest to deal with the study of speech acts. His series of speeches (lectures) given in 1955 were later on published in a book entitled *How to Do Things with Words*. This later became known as Speech Act Theory. According to Austin, communication is a series of communicative acts or speech acts. A speech act includes functions such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions or making promises. As argued by Labov and Fanshel, speech acts are a part of social interactive behavior and must be interpreted as an aspect of social interaction (Labov and Fanshel 1977: 30). John Searle further developed this theory and is most often associated with it.

According to Searle (1969), to understand language, one must understand the speaker's intention. The speech act is just the elementary unit of language used to express meaning, an utterance that expresses an intention. When one speaks, one performs an act and does so intentionally. Without understanding the speaker's intention, it is impossible grasp the intended meaning.

Since the introduction of the concept of communicative competence by Hymes, the idea that linguistic structure and social structure work together in communication has been reflected most specifically in the concept of the speech act. Different linguistic forms can be used in different situations to achieve different communicative functions. The views that speech acts differ cross-culturally and that culture can be used as a variable to explain differences in language use became important. As a result, many scholars have been interested in the study of speech acts with the aim to provide a better understanding and new insights into the correlation between linguistic forms and socio-cultural context (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983).

Speech acts can be direct or indirect (Searle, 1975). With an indirect speech act, a speaker can communicate more than what is said if the hearer has the sociolinguistic knowledge to make correct inferences. Searle (1969) also classifies speech acts into five categories (with examples): representatives (descriptions), directives (commands/requests), commissives (promises/offers), expressives (apologies), and declarations (judgments). According to Austin, a single speech act contains three separate parts: a locutionary act: performing an act of saying something, illocutionary act: performing an act in saying something and perlocutionary act: performing an act by saying something. For example, a mother tells her son: *This room is a mess*. The surface form, the locutionary act, is the literal statement. The illocutionary act expresses an indirect

request on the part of the speaker, i.e., the function that the utterance performs in the social context of family here, and the perlocutionary act expresses the mother's specific desire that the son clean the room, i.e., the result or effect produced by the utterance in the given context.

Among these, the main component of language functions is the illocutionary act, as expressed by Yule (1996:49) who affirms that "...the term speech act is generally interpreted quite narrowly to mean only the illocutionary force of an utterance." One single utterance may however have more than one illocutionary force, which is where sociolinguistic and strategic competence come into play. Consider the following statement: *It's hot in here*. This statement can be interpreted to have two or more different meanings. It can be interpreted as a request to open the window or as an offer to open the window. From a student, it might be even an indirect excuse for inattention.

As Stubbs (1983) also points out, that utterances can be wrongly interpreted because speakers can say one thing and mean another and context becomes even more essential. This relates to the appropriate production and understanding of utterances according to contextual factors. These factors are outlined by Thomas(1995) who uses Hymes' SPEAKING mnemonic.

Situation	The setting or the scene
Participants	Speaker, hearer, audience, etc.
Ends	The outcomes or goals of individuals
Act sequences	Message, message content
Key	Tone, manner, or spirit of the act
Instrumentalities	Channel or mode(written or spoken)
Norms	Norms of interpretation and interaction
Genre	Categories such as joke, lecture or advertisement

Speech act theory continues to be an important part of understanding communication. As Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) state, “one of the most compelling notions in the study of language is the notion of speech acts.”

2.6.2 Grice’s Cooperative Principle and Implicature

Alongside this line of thought, Grice (1975:51) developed his idea of conversational implicature: the implied meaning as opposed to the explicit meaning of utterances. Grice gave the following example:

John: Smith doesn’t seem to have a girlfriend these days.

Harry: He has been paying a lot of visits to New York lately.

According to Grice, Harry does not explicitly state that Smith has, or may have, a girlfriend in New York. In addition, in order for John to understand the inexplicitly stated meaning of Harry’s answer, Harry and he must have a certain amount of shared knowledge. In this particular example, according to Grice, a pragmatically competent listener will most likely infer that Smith has a girlfriend in New York. Following Grice, when people communicate, they also tend to be conversationally cooperative even though they may not be aware of it, and people expect their interlocutors to be concise, honest, relevant, and clear. For him, conversational cooperation involves four maxims: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. According to Grice (1975: 45-46), they are:

Quality: Make your contribution as informative as is required.

Quality: Do not say what you believe to be false.

Relation: Be relevant.

Manner: Avoid obscurity of expression.

Avoid ambiguity. Be brief. Be orderly. He assumes that as long as speakers abide by these maxims, implied meanings will be understood and communication will be effective. If any of these maxims are violated, however, communication will break down. From the perspective of ILP, we must consider these maxims carefully because each culture has its own unique pragmatic characteristics, and the maxims may not show themselves in the same way.

2.6.3 Politeness and “Face”

Principles such as Grice’s maxims are meant to lead to understanding of effective communication. One of the basic goals of effective communication is what we call “politeness.” With regard to Grice’s maxims, Lackoff (1973) claimed that these cannot account for politeness but are merely rules of clarity. Instead, she proposed a “Politeness Theory.” Also extending Grice’s work, Leech (1983: 132) discussed a “Politeness Principle” and its maxims, and he claimed that it is necessary to maintain good relations. His conception of politeness related to the participants’ ability to interact in harmony. Leech’s Politeness Principle ensures that interactants behave politely to one another since they respect each other’s face and requires interactants to be nice and not offend others. All humans, within all cultures of the world, project this public “face” (Goffman, 1956, 1959), a sense of positive identity and public self-esteem.

2.6.4 Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory

Politeness, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), was the phrasing of one’s remarks in such a way so as to manage the face of each interactant. This concept was defined as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61). “Positive face” refers to the desire that others approve of or value one’s wants; “negative face” is the

freedom to act without interference. In face-threatening acts (FTAs), this positive face is threatened. As Brown and Levinson pointed out, for example, the act of apologizing is face-saving for the hearer and face-threatening for the speaker. Politeness strategies can reduce the negative impact of FTA's. People use politeness strategies to protect the face of the hearer in other speech acts as well. For example, when criticizing or disagreeing with someone, speakers may use some "polite" defrayal. Rather than saying, "You are wrong," one might say, "Well, I see your point of view, but let's also consider...."

Because being indirect and being polite often go hand in hand, another term for such politeness is "linguistic indirection," and utterances may range from very indirect to brusque. For instance, Hill et al. (1986) discussed over thirty ways of phrasing a request for a pen. At one end of the continuum, a speaker might use, "Excuse me, I am sorry to bother you like this, but my pen ran out of ink, and I had been wondering if I might possibly borrow yours, just for a moment?" At the other end might be, "I am telling you to give me a pen." Anthropologists have found that the amount of indirection considered acceptable varies by culture. Some cultures are rather indirect and polite; other cultures tend to be brusque. For example, many of the studies that have been mentioned support the notion that German and Hebrew speakers are often more direct, yet the Japanese are very indirect compared to American English speakers in many of the speech acts studied. As Brown and Levinson (1987) point out, the type of politeness strategy that leads to saving face is subject to cultural variation. There are criticisms of Leech, and Brown and Levinson, but these theories are still useful for comparing cross-cultural differences. Leech (1983:31) acknowledges, "Cooperative Principle and the Politeness Principle operate variably in

different cultures or language communities, in different social situations, among different social classes.”

2.7 Speech Acts in Interlanguage Pragmatics

Now, if one looks closely at speech acts, one can easily see they require not only mastery of the forms of language but also understanding of the target language culture. Effective speech acts require that learners possess sociolinguistic competence because speech acts differ across cultures as has been discussed. Wierzbicka (1985), for example, asserts that speech acts vary in both conceptualization and verbalization. As a result, people rely on their knowledge of cultural norms for interpretation and performance of various speech acts. When learners lack knowledge of these cultural norms, and revert to their native culture norms, pragmatic failure and communication breakdown result. Sometimes these breakdowns can have serious consequences for the relationship. “No "error" of grammar can make a speaker seem so incompetent, so inappropriate, so foreign, as the kind of trouble a learner gets into when he or she doesn't understand or otherwise disregards a language's rules of use” (Rintell-Mitchell, 1989: 248).

Speech act theory should be considered very carefully in understanding and improving sociolinguistic and strategic competence. The Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989) as well as other research on the speech acts relevant to the present study include Holmes (1990) on apology, Barron(2003) on requests, House and Kasper (1987) and Al-Shalawi, H.G. (1997) on refusals. The results of these and other research projects demonstrate the need to assist foreign language learners to develop sociolinguistic competency first because it became clear that in the absence of cultural

understanding of the target language, learners rely heavily on their native language in accomplishing speech acts. This phenomenon is referred to in foreign language teaching as pragmatic transfer and occurs when “native procedures and linguistic means of speech act performance are transferred to inter-language communication” (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989:10). Takahashi & Beebe (1993) held that transfer consists of both cross-linguistic influence and cross-cultural transfer of elements. Bardovi-Harlig et al. (1991) discussed the serious consequences of lacking this competence, such as running the risk of appearing uncooperative, arrogant or offensive. For this reason, speech acts, politeness and indirectness have received a great deal of attention in interlanguage pragmatics research.

2.7.1 Assessment of Pragmatic Competence

As Rose and Kasper (2001:245) point out, research on the assessment of pragmatic competence has gained less attention compared with the significant amount of research on teaching of pragmatics. Some useful work does include Hudson, Detmer, and Brown’s framework for assessing cross-cultural pragmatics, which was adapted in part for the Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test (MDCT) used in this study (Hudson, Detmer, & Brown, 1995).

2.7.2 The Communicative Act of Request

Discourse completion tasks (DCTs) such as Hudson et al’s have been widely used in research on speech acts, including those on requests (Blum-Kulka 1984, 1991; Ervin-Tripp 1976, Trosborg, 1995) and apologies (E. Olshtain and A. D. Cohen 1983; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984). According to Blum- Kulka and Olshtain (1984), three major levels of directness for requests can be identified cross-linguistically on theoretical grounds: impositives (direct), conventionally indirect requests, and non-conventionally indirect requests. A more complete

scale of nine directness categories ranging from most direct to least direct, based on these three major levels, was used in the CCSARP (See Appendix B). The CCSARP involved subjects from a variety of language backgrounds (American, British, and Australian English, Canadian French, Hebrew, German, and Danish), and a questionnaire consisting of eight request and eight apology contexts was used. Making requests, as a directive which involves the speaker's effort to gain the hearer's assistance, is a very difficult speech act for learners because it "call[s] for considerable cultural and linguistic expertise on the part of the learner" and "requires a high level of appropriateness for their successful completion" (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984:206). As suggested by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, one of the techniques to minimize the imposition on the hearer is the use of indirect strategies. Although the head act, or main form of the request, can be used without any modifiers, it is usually preceded and/or followed by modifiers that mitigate or aggravate the impact of the request on the addressee (Marquez Reiter 2000). Ways to reduce the impact of requests include the use of conditionals or the past tense or the use of hedges. The study also considered the following supportive strategies.

1. Grounder: Reasons, justifications (I forgot my notebook).
2. Disarmer: Remove potential objections (I know you are very busy . . .)
3. Imposition minimizer: Reduce imposition (It shouldn't take long).
4. Preparator: Announcement of request, asking about the availability of something, permission of hearer (I'd like to ask you something).
5. Getting a pre-commitment (Would you do me a favor?).

(Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Hudson et al., 1995)

One of main goals of this study is to analyze the speech act of request. Given the difficulty of applying the nine-point scale across cultures, most ILP studies focus on the three main categories: direct (1-4), conventionally indirect (5-7), and non-conventionally indirect (8-9). This practice has been followed in this study as well.

2.7.3 The Communicative Act of Apology

Apology is a frequently used speech act which serves different purposes ranging from maintaining polite rituals that could vary from one society to the another (social etiquette), to the acknowledgment of serious offences. Holmes (1990), taking into account Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969:161) studies on the subject, affirms that this speech act must have the following conditions: a) An act has occurred. b) A believes that the act has offended B. c) A takes responsibility for the act. However, the situation is different when people learn a foreign language since speech acts have been accepted as one of the troublesome points in learning a second/foreign language (Wolfson 1989). Although speech acts are universal and can be found nearly in all languages, their usage differs according to the cultural context. When discussing apologies, it is useful to discuss politeness theory and face. Holmes (1990) points out that what matters most in the act of apologising is the face of the hearer. Therefore, an apology is addressed to the hearer's face need and intends to remedy an offence for which the speaker takes responsibility. Brown and Levinson (1987) say that the weightiness of a contemplated apology as a face threat must be calculated considering the level of intimacy and the power relationship of the parties involved as well as the seriousness of the offence (1987: 211-212), but direct strategies generally involve a high cost for speaker's face. Stenström (1994) also affirms that in choosing to use a routinised form of apology such as *I apologise* or *sorry* as the explicit

expression of an apology, the speaker accepts the need to apologise and assumes the face cost involved. This cost refers to the cost of losing face in public since an apology generally implies guilt on the speaker's part. There are a number of linguistic strategies for expressing apologies and a number of researchers have developed systems for classifying them, but classification for this project uses an adapted version of Cohen and Olshtain (1981) (See Appendix C).

Including the CCSARP project previously mentioned, other studies have shown that some learners employ language transfer from their L1 in apology speech acts, and some learners approximate native speaker norms or use formulas completely different from the formulas they use in their L1. For example, Olshtain (1983) carried out a study with native English, Hebrew, and Russian subjects to compare their apology use and found that English speakers transfer their apology strategies to Hebrew as well. Olshtain and Cohen (1993) found that native speakers' apology forms are patterned and nonnative speakers deviate from native speaker norms because of transfer and lack of proficiency. Erçetin (1995; cited in Tunçel 1999:49) carried out a study on the use of apologies by Turkish EFL learners, and she claimed that EFL learners exhibited transfer from Turkish as well. Tunçel (1999) also studied the use of apologies and offering thanks with EFL learners at Anadolu University. His findings suggested that EFL learners exhibited transfer in the use of apologies from their L1 in certain situations (such as car accidents where some learners shifted the blame to the person who had been hit).

2.7.4 The Communicative Act of Refusal

The study of the speech acts of refusal is important because refusals are very culturally specific. It is clear to anyone who has traveled that different cultures have different ways of turning down

an offer or request. Compared to some other speech acts, refusals for nonnative speakers involve a high level of difficulty and require a high degree of sociolinguistic competence.

Inappropriateness of a refusal may even cause a serious problem in the personal or business relationship. How a person says “No” may be considered more important than the answer itself. In other words, it’s not what you say; it’s how you say it. Refusals are a major problem area for many non-native speakers, and for this reason they are important for educators. Refusals are complex and often long because the risk of offending is so much a part of the speech act that they require indirectness to increase politeness. Refusals are a likely place to find L1 to L2 transfer as learners struggle to achieve a pragmatically appropriate level of indirectness. Since refusal is associated with politeness, it affects also how non-native speakers’ characters are perceived. Refusals are generally classified as direct or indirect and have their own sub-classes. The classifications breakdown of Beebe et al (1990: 72-73) has been adapted and used in this study for data analysis purposes (See Appendix D).

3. METHODOLOGY OF THIS STUDY

3.1 Participants

Thirty-one Turkish learners of English participated in this study as the non-native speakers (NNSs). The Turkish learners were enrolled in the English prep program at a university in Turkey, where they were expected to achieve a 550 TOEFL score in order to begin their freshmen classes. There were 31 students who answered the questionnaire, 17 females and 14 males with an average age of 18, ranging from 17 to 20 years old. The students received between 16 and 18 hours of skills-based instruction each week. All classes were taught in English and included both native American English instructors and non-native Turkish instructors. Students

were all at the Lower Advanced level of study and were therefore expected to be able to pass the TOEFL at the end of the term (as almost all subsequently did). The students had very little contact with native English speakers outside the classroom. 17 native speakers of American English served as the control for the questionnaire items and are referred to as the native (NSs) speakers for the purposes of this study. The two classes observed were taught by a native speaker of American English.

3.2 MDCT: Multiple-Choice Discourse Completion Test

Brown (2001:301) loosely defines a MDCT as a pragmatics instrument that requires students to read a written description of a situation and select what would be best to say in that situation from a set of choices. While all MDCTs should share these general characteristics, a situation and a set of answer choices (appropriate responses), there is no specific definition that tells what an MDCT item should look like. MDCT item format varies depending on context and purpose, evolving and adapting to specific needs, as has been done here. A MDCT with 12 situations (4 apologies, 4 requests, and 4 refusals) was created for the study (See Appendix A). The situations were chosen to include some situations that students were not likely to have encountered previously. Generally, one of the four choices for each test item was both sociopragmatically “appropriate” and pragmalinguistically “accurate” and thus considered the most appropriate choice, assuming a small amount of native speaker variation is natural. In some of the situations, however, it became clear that native speakers exhibited wider variation in their answers, allowing for different strategies in certain situations, and these situations were kept on the MDCT to compare the repertoire of learner strategies to native speaker strategies.

3.3 Classroom Observations

Two separate classes at the Lower Advanced level were observed and notes made on some instances of possible miscommunication and the strategies used in class. One class was a Writing class and one a Listening and Speaking class.

4. Limitations of this Study

4.1 Native Speaker Norm

Along with the idea of communicative competence arises the idea of language standards, a prescriptive notion. Although we cannot say that there is one correct way to communicate an idea, it is clear from previous studies that there are a range of choices that can be considered “successful or not successful” in communicating meaning. To strengthen the reliability of the questions in this study, native speakers have been used as a control group to develop a range of words/phrases that convey the meaning intended, or do not. However, any study is affected to a certain extent by the native speakers chosen, as variation also exists within the native speaker community.

4.2 Number of Participants

A larger number of participants, both native and non-native, would likely increase the reliability of this study. The results are harder to expand beyond the student group considered when there are fewer participants in the study.

5. Data Analysis

The data analysis was done primarily based on the coding strategies previously discussed for the three speech acts: request, apology, and refusal. The goal of the researcher was not to look for a particular result, but to evaluate the data and consider the NS and NNS differences in strategies to achieve these speech acts, as well as to look for any patterns that might exist in the way the two groups communicated meaning differently in speech acts.

5.1 Comparison of Request Strategies by NS and NNS

MDCT Questions 1-4

1. You are trying to study in your room and you hear loud music coming from another student's room down the hall. You don't know the student, but you decide to ask him to turn the music down.

- a. Turn it down, please.
- b. Can you turn down your music?
- c. Excuse me, I'm trying to study. Would you mind turning the music down a little?
- d. I'm trying to study down here!

Table 1:MDCT Question 1, Requests

Question 1	A	B	C	D
Native Speaker	1 (6%)	X	16 (94%)	X
Non-native Speaker	2 (6.5%)	9 (29%)	19 (61%)	1 (3.5%)

Although one NS and two NNSs prefer a direct strategy here, and one NNS chose a non-conventionally indirect strategy, both NSs and NNS prefer the conventionally indirect strategy that is considered a universally way of being polite and preserving "face." There are some clear differences however. NSs completely reject the B choice as inappropriate although it is the

second favored choice for NNS. In fact, approximately 1/3 of the NNSs choose B or D, which NSs reject entirely. Option two is more direct, therefore more confrontational. To reduce the face-threatening aspect, native speakers choose the third option. The head act (primary message) is the same, but NSs use a variety of hedges or supportive strategies that many of NNSs do not choose. For example, “Excuse me” is a polite way of getting the attention of the listener, a way of reducing the imposition on the hearer and of saving face. “I’m trying to study” offers an explanation for the request that follows and is another way of reducing the imposition of the request. Using a past tense modal such as “Would you mind” is also considered more polite and is a way of softening the request, as opposed to the present tense and more familiar “Can you...” Finally, the use of “a little” is an additional softener. In reality, the music may need to be turned down a lot, but this phrase has a pragmatic politeness function, rather than a literal one.

2. You are now discussing your assignment with your teacher. Your teacher speaks very fast. You do not follow what he is saying, so you want to ask your teacher to say it again. What do you say?
- a. Again, please.
 - b. Could you repeat that, please?
 - c. Sorry, but I couldn’t understand. Would you mind repeating that?
 - d. I’m not following.

Table 2:MDCT Question 2, Requests

Question 2	A	B	C	D
Native Speaker	X	3 (18%)	14 (82%)	X
Non-native Speaker	1 (3%)	17 (55%)	12 (46%)	1 (3%)

Again, NSs and NNSs mostly prefer the conventionally indirect strategy, with two NNS exceptions of a direct strategy and a non-conventionally indirect strategy. We find that the results are similar to question 1. The difference here is that more NS chose the option B, which in this question uses the past tense modal “Could,” making this utterance more polite. In fact more NNS shifted to this choice as well, making it the preferred NNS choice. Still, most NS prefer option C. Again, the head is the same, but C includes an apology, and a grounder prior to the request (here assumption of some responsibility by using the I perspective and explaining the request), which again is formed with “Would you mind...” All of these serve to reduce the imposition on the hearer that the request will cause.

3. You are a policeman, and you stop a car that is driving very slowly and blocking traffic. You ask the driver to see his license, registration, and insurance.

- a. License, registration, and insurance, please.
- b. Can I see your license, registration, and insurance?
- c. You were driving dangerously slowly. I need to see your license, registration, and insurance.
- d. Do you know what the minimum speed limit is here?

Table 3:MDCT Question 3, Requests

Question 3	A	B	C	D
Native Speaker	8 (47%)	3 (18%)	6 (35%)	X
Non-native Speaker	7 (22.5%)	15 (48%)	7 (22.5%)	3 (10%)

Number three is an interesting question because it challenges perceptions of the role of police officers in society. Are the polite public servants there to help us, or are they pushy, controlling and power hungry? Do we have to obey them or not? For the first time NS and NNS are more divided on their answers to this. Until this point, NSs have preferred conventionally indirect

requests, but here almost half of the NS chose a direct request, a performative expressing an obligation, with a minimum polite marker “please” as a tag on the end. Even the second most preferred choice for NSs (option C) had no politeness markers. The only explanatory move was an explanation of blame (You were driving slowly). Almost half of NNSs, on the other hand, chose B, a request with minimal politeness markers. Option D was also chosen by no NSs and 10% of NNSs. For NSs, it appears that police officers tell, not ask, while the opposite is true for NNSs.

4. You are watching a basketball game. A person you don’t know comes and stands just in front of you blocking your view. You want to ask the person not to block your view. What do you say?

- a. Move over, please.
- b. Could you please move?
- c. Excuse me, but you are blocking my view. Would you mind moving over some?
- d. Are you going to sit down there?

Table 4:MDCT Question 4, Requests

Question 4	A	B	C	D
Native Speaker	1 (6%)	3 (18%)	13 (76%)	X
Non-native Speaker	6 (19%)	6 (19%)	15 (48%)	3 (10%)

This question is very similar to question 1, and yet we find some differences in the answers. The situation here is one where the speaker will not likely see the person again. NSs have adjusted their strategy and more speakers would choose the less polite option B. The NNSs show a more significant change. Not only have more chosen a less polite option (B), but almost 1/3 have chosen a direct option or a non-conventionally indirect option, which are the most face-threatening choices. It appears that both NSs and NNS agree that there may be less need to

reduce the imposition on the hearer when the hearer is at fault in a public situation, but most native speakers still prefer to make a conventionally indirect request with supportive moves such as openers (Excuse me), grounders (you are blocking my view), and softeners (some), while NNSs choose not to use these supportive strategies.

In summary, the results suggest that the native speakers in this study prefer more indirect strategies, and they prefer more supportive moves during the request speech act. At times, they deliberately choose a direct approach, for example, from police officers where NSs expect to be told, somewhat politely, what to do, while NNSs expect to be asked. The native speakers in this study generally avoided the middle ground of politeness. Grounders, past conditionals, hedges, vocabulary-based softeners, and openers are all strategies that NSs make frequent use of when choosing to be indirect as a means of reducing imposition and FTA's, and they use them as the first choice in most personal situations, despite social distance. As shown by the response distribution, NNSs do not make use of these supportive strategies as often, preferring to convey politeness with "please" and present or sometimes past conditionals. It also appears that NNSs drop politeness markers more readily than NSs in situations with strangers who are acting inappropriately. Finally, NNSs in many circumstances may choose a direct strategy where NSs do not, or even a non-conventionally indirect strategy, which NSs almost completely avoid, perhaps because of its potential to be perceived as sarcasm, which could be face-threatening to the hearer.

Table 5:MDCT Requests, Comparison of NS and NNS choices

Situations	NS Top Choices	NNS Top Choices
Loud music	C/94%	C/61%
Teacher talks fast	C/82%	B/55%
Police officer	A/47%	B/48%
Blocking view	C/76%	C/48%

5.2 Comparison of Apology Strategies by NS and NNS

MDCT Questions 5-8

5. A young woman bumps into your shopping cart at the supermarket and some of your groceries spill onto the floor. Aside from helping you pick them up, she says:

- a. Sorry.
- b. I'm very sorry.
- c. I'm really sorry.
- d. Please forgive me.

Table 6:MDCT Question 5, Apologies

Question 5	A	B	C	D
Native Speaker	2 (12%)	4 (23%)	11 (65%)	X
Non-native Speaker	7 (23%)	6 (19%)	14 (45%)	4 (13%)

In this situation, NSs and NNSs share similarities in that they both acknowledge guilt and express apology although NS use the direct, less formal, apology strategy less frequently than NNSs. NNSs were more likely to use a short, informal apology. One result to note is that NSs never choose option D. This is a very formal saying reserved for much more serious offenses

than this situation describes. Yet several NNSs chose this option even though it is so inappropriate that it has the potential to mock the hearer and become a FTA.

6. You borrowed a book from your teacher, which you promised to return today. When you see your teacher, however, you realize that you forgot to bring it along.

Teacher: I hope you enjoyed the book I lent you.

- a. Sorry. I forgot.
- b. Excuse me, I forgot.
- c. Oh, I'm really sorry. I completely forgot.
- d. I've had a lot of studying to do lately, and I forgot.

Table 7:MDCT Question 6, Apologies

Question 6	A	B	C	D
Native Speaker	3 (18%)	1 (6%)	13 (76%)	X
Non-native Speaker	4 (13%)	2 (6.5%)	23 (74%)	2 (6.5%)

NS and NNS share very similar results here by acknowledging responsibility, and accepting blame. The only real result of note is that two of the NNSs chose to provide an explanation, in essence a deferral of responsibility (the fault is all of this studying I had to do), without an actual apology. This is an interesting choice because no such explanation is part of the description.

Also, no NSs chose this strategy.

7. You promised you'd buy your neighbor medicine for her sick child while in town, but you forgot. Your neighbor asks, "Did you get the medicine?"

- a. Sorry. I forgot.

- b. Excuse me, I forgot it!
- c. Oh, I'm really sorry. I completely forgot, but I'll go back now and get it.
- d. I've had a lot on my mind lately, and I forgot.

Table 8:MDCT Question 7, Apologies

Question 7	A	B	C	D
Native Speaker	X	X	17 (100%)	X
Non-native Speaker	1 (3%)	3 (10%)	24 (77%)	3 (10%)

NS were consistent in their responses to this situation. They all preferred a large number of politeness strategies, for example using an opener (Oh) and an intensifier (really). They apologized, gave an explanation and took responsibility, and offered to repair the mistakes. Most NNSs also chose this option, with one choosing a very informal response, three choosing to begin with “Excuse me,” and three giving an explanation as an indirect apology, but not offering a specific apology or offer of reparation. It is interesting to note that 23% of the strategies chosen by non-natives offered no offer of repair as part of the apology act.

8. You are applying for a job in a company. You go into the office to turn in your application form to the manager. You talk to the manager for a few minutes. When you move to give the manager your form, you accidentally knock over a vase on the desk and spill water over a pile of papers.

- a. Sorry!
- b. Excuse me, please!
- c. Oh, I'm really really sorry!
- d. Sorry, I've been really clumsy lately.

Table 9:MDCT Question 8, Apologies

Question 8	A	B	C	D
Native Speaker	1 (6%)	X	16 (94 %)	X
Non-native Speaker	6 (19%)	2 (6.5%)	18 (58 %)	5 (16%)

More than a quarter of NNSs chose options B or D, which were not chosen at all by NSs. NNSs also chose A as their second preference, but using the head act alone with no softeners seems a bit unusual for the formality of a applying for a job. NSs, on the other hand, were almost uniformly consistent (with the exception of one A) in their choice of option C. Again, C has an opener (Oh) and repetition of *really*. Although *really* is less formal than *very*, it is less formulaic, so it carries a more personal and emotional meaning. *Very* is often used when an apology is required and therefore given, but not necessarily felt as strongly. Still, both are supportive moves to increase politeness while acknowledging responsibility. Again, several NNSs chose option D, which includes an apology, and a sort of explanation. Two of the NNSs chose “Excuse me...”, which NSs avoided.

In summary, some of the differences in strategy use that we see involve the use of more direct, less formal apology structures by NNSs, particularly in the lack of supportive moves such as openers, compared to NSs. Some NNSs chose the option “Forgive me” although this is not appropriate, except in a serious context. Additionally, it seems that NNSs have a different contextual understanding of the phrase “excuse me.” NSs rarely use the term to mean “I’m sorry” although it may serve as an introduction to an apology or an explanation. It functions more as an opener, to get the attention of the hearer and is especially common preceding requests, to make it clear that an imposition is coming. Additionally, NSs will often choose an option that allows them to make reparations if that option exists, while NNSs do not choose a

repair option usually. NNSs are however more likely to offer some type of an excuse or an explanation and identify the cause as an outside circumstance. This apology strategy contrasts with request strategy, where NSs were the ones most likely to offer explanations for their requests. On the whole, however, we can see in the table below, NNSs show less negative transfer from the L1 in the apology speech act. The top choice for all situations was the same for NSs and NNSs, whereas only two were the same for requests. One aspect to consider in looking at the results is how much less certain NNSs were about how to handle spilling water on the desk when applying for a job. As students, the NNSs have very little familiarity or pragmatic knowledge of such a situation, so the large percentage difference is possibly due to a lack of strategic knowledge in approaching an unfamiliar situation, and reliance on L1 or on strategies used with other speech acts.

Table 10:MDCT Apologies, Comparison of NS and NNS choices

Situations	NS Top Choices	NNS Top Choices
Grocery bump	C/65%	C/45%
Teacher’s book	C/76%	C/74%
Neighbor’s medicine	C/100%	C/77%
Wet job papers	C/94%	C/58%

5.3 Comparison of NS and NNS Refusals

MDCT Questions 9-12

9. You are walking through a department store. As you walk past a display, a salesclerk asks you to watch a short video demonstration for a new product. You cannot stop because you are on your way to meet someone for lunch.

a. No thanks.

- b. Excuse me, but I can't stop.
- c. Thank you, but I don't have time right now.
- d. Sorry, I have to go to a lunch meeting.

Table 11:MDCT Question 9, Refusals

Question 9	A	B	C	D
Native Speaker	8 (47%)	X	7 (41%)	2 (12%)
Non-native Speaker	17 (55%)	2 (7%)	8 (26%)	4 (13%)

Although there is variation from NSs and NNSs both here, some results are interesting. Again, some NNSs chose “excuse me” although contextually it is inappropriate here. Again, NNSs are more likely to be direct, but may also choose a polite option. NSs follow the same pattern, but are slightly more likely than NNSs to use supportive moves to convey politeness.

10. A friend of yours asks you to go with her on a trip organized by the university next weekend, but you don't feel like going because you don't like some of the people who are going.

You would say:

- a. Thank you, but I can't.
- b. I'm busy. I have plans already.
- c. Sorry, next weekend I'll be busy. Thanks though!
- d. Sorry, but I'm not crazy about some of the people going, so I'll pass.

Table 12:MDCT Question 10, Refusals

Question 10	A	B	C	D
Native Speaker	5 (29%)	X	7 (41%)	5 (29%)
Non-native Speaker	4 (13%)	11 (35%)	10 (26%)	6 (19%)

The answers choices for question 10 show a lot of variation. Showing gratitude for the invitation or apologizing for refusing were possible strategies. People were also more likely to provide an explanation in question 10, possibly because they know the person well. The exception that stands out here is that, despite the variation, the greatest number of NNSs chose B, which contains no opener, softener, hedge, or statement of gratitude. No NSs chose this option.

11. You are a teacher at a large school. The principal asks you to call all of the other teachers tonight and tell them that there will be an emergency meeting tomorrow. You cannot do it because you know that it will take hours and you have friends coming over to your house tonight from out of town. You have had these plans for weeks.

- a. Sorry, but I can't.
- b. Excuse me, but I can't do it.
- c. I'm very sorry, but I already have plans I just can't change for tonight.
- d. I already have plans to meet friends tonight.

Table 13:MDCT Question 11, Refusals

Question 11	A	B	C	D
Native Speaker	X	X	17 (100%)	X
Non-native Speaker	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	27 (87%)	2 (7%)

The NSs were very clear about their preferences here. The NNSs were also fairly consistent, with one person relying on a more informal information version of the refusal, another “excuse me,” and another two providing indirect responses with no explicit refusal and no opener.

12. Your sibling asks you to be the best man or maid of honor at his/her wedding. The person

your sibling is going to marry is an awful person who only wants the family money and has already cheated on your sibling several times. Your mother, who is not attending the wedding, has also already told you not to do it. What do you say?

- a. No way. I won't do it.
- b. Please excuse me, but I won't be able to do it.
- c. I'm very sorry, but I don't support this marriage.
- d. I'm really really sorry, but I just don't believe you should be marrying this person, and I can't pretend I do.

Table 14:MDCT Question 12, Refusals

Question 12	A	B	C	D
Native Speaker	1 (6%)	X	4 (24%)	12 (71%)
Non-native Speaker	7 (23%)	9 (29%)	6 (19%)	9 (29%)

Although 1 native speaker would have been direct here, 23% of the NNSs felt that way. 29% of the NNSs again chose “excuse me” in a context where it doesn't fit exactly, which was clear to the NSs, none of whom selected B. Both groups like the C choice, but there is a large gap for D. Over 70% of NSs preferred this response, which included repetition of really, use of “just” and a statement of principle, while only 29% of NNs chose it.

In summary, NNSs are often more direct and use fewer supportive moves. NSs also prefer to show gratitude for the offer or an apology prior to the refusal more often than NNSs. However, native and non-natives appear to agree that it is acceptable to be direct to salespeople offering unwanted services. In fact, similar strategies are preferred when the hearer is not close to the

speaker. For example, the refusal to the boss is very similar. We find large differences between NS and NNS when it comes to family and friends. Since NSs may use a variety of strategies when it comes to the refusal speech act, this might affect NNSs ability to gain a handle on the range of strategies available for their use. As mentioned before, non-native speakers are also unclear about the different meanings of “excuse me.”

Table 15:MDCT Refusals, Comparison of NS and NNS choices

Situations	NS Top Choices	NNS Top Choices
Salesclerk	A/47%	A/55%
No to friend	C/41%	B/35%
No to boss	C/100%	C/87%
No to family	D/71%	B and D/29%

5.4 Classroom Observations

It was clear in classroom observations that students were not frequently using achievement strategies to help their learning, but rather reduction strategies to avoid risk. When they did not understand what the teacher had said, they were most often turning to the student next to them and asking in Turkish. It was also interesting to note that some would simply not reply when asked a direct question that they did seem to understand. They seemed to equate silence with a reply that they did not know the answer, even though the teacher stressed on several occasions that a spoken answer was required, even if it was, “I don’t know.” Additionally, students who did not have their assignments complete at the beginning of class explained that they had not understood the assignment and therefore had not done it. This might be explained by the apology strategy that some students also chose on the MDCT, in offering an outside cause as opposed to an assumption of blame or regret. On one occasion, after several warnings, the instructor told a disruptive student to leave the classroom using an indirect request, “You can take your books and leave the classroom.” The instructor was calm and even somewhat quiet in making the request,

and the student was obviously unsure of the force of the message. Perhaps the instructor's intent was to save face for the student as much as possible, but the student missed the implied message because it was indirect, and rather than leaving, or even apologizing and asking to stay and repair the behavior directly, stopped all eye contact and stared at his desk (a reduction strategy unfortunately, but with implied repair perhaps?). Not until the teacher adopted a more direct, face-threatening strategy did the student adjust his response to the request.

Despite what appeared to be unfamiliarity with communicative strategies and lack of personal initiative in taking risks even at the advanced level, there were some exceptions in the two classes. A few students in one class in particular were obviously willing to try to explain or even question ideas presented by the instructor, but this was also likely influenced by the class's being a skills-based Listening and Speaking class, so they were motivated by the topic, or perhaps grade, since participation affected the grade much more than in the other class observed. Also, the instructor placed the students into groups during the second half of this class and explained that there would be a competition. The successful group would be the one that used English only to complete the exercise and had the most correct answers. The prize would be bonus points on the midterm. They were allowed to ask the instructor questions as long as they were not asking the specific answer. Their use of communicative English, and achievement strategies in particular, increased significantly during that 30-minute period as they spoke almost no Turkish. Whether this is a result of the topic, the competition, or the instructor's directly tying the result to the grade is unclear, but it does show that most students were capable of using a much wider range of strategies than they typically chose to use, but they needed to be pushed.

6. Conclusion

As it was stated, the aim of this study was to investigate the speech act realizations of these EFL learners in situations which required requests, apologies, and refusals and compare them to the native speakers who participated in the study. The data collected from the MDCT showed variation depending on the speech act considered. For the request speech act, for both native and non-native speakers, the preference was conventionally indirect requests, which confirmed the findings of previous studies on requests (Blum-Kulka and House, 1989). While NSs and NNSs often communicate using the same kind of head act (the primary form), they vary significantly in the supportive moves that they choose. It seems that NNSs are more likely to believe politeness is achieved solely by adding please, often at the end. Both native and non-native speakers used question forms and modals quite often, but NNSs more likely to choose a past modal than a present one. Native speakers also used a greater variety of modals, particularly making use of “Would you mind...,” whereas NNS preferred can or could. Additionally NSs more often offered an explanation for the request (grounders) prior to a request. Native speakers also used more openers, or linguistic elements that are used to attract the hearer’s attention to the speech act, such as “Excuse me Sir, could you... “NNSs, on the other hand, relied on the word “please” much more frequently than NSs. For apologies, NNSs used more formulaic expressions such as “I’m very sorry” or “Forgive me” when formality was not required, or used informal expressions in formal situations. In the same context, the native speakers in the study preferred intensifiers and repetition such as, “I’m really really sorry.” Additionally, NNSs made use of the phrase “Excuse me” similarly to “sorry” although NSs use this for a different purpose in context. Additionally, NNSs sometimes used a deferral of blame strategy or an explanation in certain situations where NSs did not. NSs, on the other hand, did not offer explanations as often as the

NNSs in the refusal speech act, but were more likely to preface their refusals with some type of acknowledgement of the offer, such as “Thanks for asking, but...”

It is clear that despite their grammatical competence, these students do not have the sociolinguistic and strategic competence that one would hope for at this level. This study therefore supports previous studies claiming that grammatical competence may be very different from sociolinguistic and strategic competence. The learners in this study may not have the linguistic repertoire to achieve the level of indirectness that NSs prefer, or they may simply not realize that there is a difference. They rely on reduction, rather than achievement strategies, when they are unsure about the situation. This is consistent with the classroom observations, where students exhibited the same tendency, including reverting to Turkish frequently when communicatively challenged. It is clear that these students would benefit from a greater focus on sociolinguistic and strategic competence, including specific strategies for handling unfamiliar situations. Students can be taught how to use more supportive moves to convey the politeness they intend in the target language, instead of portraying themselves in an incorrect light, due to different sociolinguistic perspectives. One difficulty here, as was discussed with the instructor, is the test-based mentality that prompts students to ask so often how specific exercises and activities contribute directly to their passing the TOEFL, as if that were the only goal in their language development. Strategies for achieving sociolinguistic and strategic competence are difficult for them to connect to their TOEFL goals, so they tend to reject them. This, however, is a broader consideration for EFL teaching in Turkey that goes beyond this project.

On the positive side, these students were obviously intelligent and did respond to a positive and encouraging approach. Although the MDCT questionnaire was given to them as an option rather than a requirement, almost all chose to take it. Many even expressed a desire to see the results of the study for the purposes of learning from it. It would be useful to guide these students further in the classroom by teaching specific strategies that allow students to easily perceive the relevance to their immediate learning goals. As for the speech acts, it seems that request and refusal speech acts are the areas where students' communicative competence would benefit most immediately from instruction on communicative strategies although certainly some discussion of apologies would be certainly useful as well. Beyond clarifying certain usages of terms such as "excuse me" and the use of extra supporting moves, pushing them to role play situations beyond school life should be beneficial for them in improving their sociolinguistic and strategic competence. Given the differences in choice of strategies between these NSs and NNSs in the study, it is clear that miscommunication might result, leading to incorrect perceptions about each other because of differences in how and when politeness is conveyed.

7. Suggestions for Further Research

This study can be extended to a larger number of students and of native speakers as well to increase its reliability. It can also be used by researchers from other university preparatory schools in order to compare the level of their students' strategic competence levels with the ones from Koc University. Furthermore, it would be interesting to attempt an interventionist-based study to evaluate the effectiveness of trying to teach of the strategies mentioned here for improving student competence.

8. Acknowledgements

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Lastly, I offer my regards and blessings to the participants and to all of those who supported me in any respect during the completion of the project.

9. Appendices

Appendix A

MULTIPLE-CHOICE DISCOURSE COMPLETION TEST

Instructions

Circle or write the letter of the answer that you feel is most likely to be used by a native speaker of American English.

1. You are trying to study in your room and you hear loud music coming from another student's room down the hall. You don't know the student, but you decide to ask him to turn the music down.

- a. Turn it down, please.
- b. Can you turn down your music?
- c. Excuse me, I'm trying to study. Would you mind turning the music down a little?
- d. I'm trying to study down here!

2. You are now discussing your assignment with your teacher. Your teacher speaks very fast. You do not follow what he is saying, so you want to ask your teacher to say it again. What do you say?

- a. Again, please.
- b. Could you repeat that, please?
- c. Sorry, but I couldn't understand. Would you mind repeating that?
- d. I'm not following.

3. You are a policeman, and you stop a car that is driving very slowly and blocking traffic. You ask the driver to see his license, registration, and insurance.

- a. License, registration, and insurance, please.
- b. Can I see your license, registration, and insurance?
- c. You were driving dangerously slowly. I need to see your license, registration, and insurance.
- d. Do you know what the minimum speed limit is here?

4. You are watching a basketball game. A person you don't know comes and stands just in front of you blocking your view. You want to ask the person not to block your view. What do you say?

- a. Move over, please.
- b. Could you please move?
- c. Excuse me, but you are blocking my view. Would you mind moving over some?
- d. Are you going to sit down there?

5. A young woman bumps into your shopping cart at the supermarket and some of your groceries spill onto the floor. Aside from helping you pick them up, she says:

- a. Sorry.
- b. I'm very sorry.
- c. I'm really sorry.
- d. Please forgive me.

6. You borrowed a book from your teacher, which you promised to return today. When you see your teacher, however, you realize that you forgot to bring it along.

Teacher: I hope you enjoyed the book I lent you.

- a. Sorry. I forgot.
- b. Excuse me, I forgot.
- c. Oh, I'm really sorry. I completely forgot.
- d. I've had a lot of studying to do lately, and I forgot.

7. You promised you'd buy your neighbor medicine for her sick child while in town, but you forgot. Your neighbor asks, "Did you get the medicine?"

- a. Sorry. I forgot.
- b. Excuse me, I forgot it!
- c. Oh, I'm really sorry. I completely forgot, but I'll go back now and get it.
- d. I've had a lot on my mind lately, and I forgot.

8. You are applying for a job in a company. You go into the office to turn in your application form to the manager. You talk to the manager for a few minutes. When you move to give the manager your form, you accidentally knock over a vase on the desk and spill water over a pile of

papers.

- a. Sorry!
- b. Excuse me, please!
- c. Oh, I'm really really sorry!
- d. Sorry, I've been really clumsy lately.

9. You are walking through a department store. As you walk past a display, a salesclerk asks you to watch a short video demonstration for a new product. You cannot stop because you are on your way to meet someone for lunch.

- a. No thanks.
- b. Excuse me, but I can't stop.
- c. Thank you, but I don't have time right now.
- d. Sorry, I have to go to a lunch meeting.

10. A friend of yours asks you to go with her on a trip organized by the university next weekend, but you don't feel like going because you don't like some of the people who are going.

You would say:

- a. Thank you, but I can't.
- b. I'm busy. I have plans already.
- c. Sorry, next weekend I'll be busy. Thanks though!
- d. Sorry, but I'm not crazy about some of the people going, so I'll pass.

11. You are a teacher at a large school. The principal asks you to call all of the other teachers tonight and tell them that there will be an emergency meeting tomorrow. You cannot do it because you know that it will take hours and you have friends coming over to your house tonight from out of town. You have had these plans for weeks.

- a. Sorry, but I can't.
- b. Excuse me, but I can't do it.
- c. I'm very sorry, but I already have plans I just can't change for tonight.
- d. I already have plans to meet friends tonight.

12. Your sibling asks you to be the best man or maid of honor at his/her wedding. The person your sibling is going to marry is an awful person who only wants the family money and has already cheated on your sibling several times. Your mother, who is not attending the wedding, has also already told you not to do it. What do you say?

- a. No way. I won't do it.
- b. Please excuse me, but I won't be able to do it.
- c. I'm very sorry, but I don't support this marriage.
- d. I'm really really sorry, but I just don't believe you should be marrying this person, and I can't pretend I do.

Appendix B: Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) directness categories (from direct to indirect)

1. MOOD DERIVABLE: utterances in which the grammatical mood of the verb signals illocutionary force (e.g., 'Leave me alone', 'Clean up that mess.')

2. PERFORMATIVES: utterances in which the illocutionary force is explicitly named (e.g., ‘I am asking you to clean up the mess.’)

3. HEDGED PERFORMATIVES: utterances in which the naming of the illocutionary force is modified by hedging expressions (e.g., ‘I would like to ask you to give your presentation a week earlier than scheduled.’)

4. OBLIGATION STATEMENTS: utterances which state the obligation of the hearer to carry out the act (e.g., ‘You’ll have to move that car.’).

5. WANT STATEMENTS: utterances which state the speaker’s desire that the hearer carries out the act (e.g., ‘I really want you to stop bothering me.’)

6. SUGGESTORY FORMULAE: utterances which contain a suggestion to do X (e.g., ‘How about cleaning up?’)

7. QUERY PREPARATORY: utterances containing reference to preparatory conditions (e.g., ability, willingness) as conventionalized in any specific language (e.g., ‘Could you clean up the kitchen, please?’, ‘Would you mind moving your car?’)

8. STRONG HINTS: utterances containing partial reference to object of element needed for the implementation of the act (e.g., ‘You have left the kitchen in a mess.’)

9. MILD HINTS: utterances that make no reference to the request proper (or any of its elements) but are interpretable as requests by context (e.g., ‘I am a nun.’ in response to a persistent hassler).

Appendix C: Apology-Specific Strategies

1. **Expression of an apology:** contains "sorry," "excuse," "forgive," or "apologize" and can be intensified with "really" or "very"
2. **Acknowledgment of responsibility** – degree of recognition of fault/blame, either implicit or explicit
3. **Explanation or account:** description of situation which led to the offense, serving as indirect way of apologizing.
4. **Offer of repair:** the apologizer makes a bid to carry out an action or provide payment for some kind of damage which resulted from his/her infraction, but is strategy is situation-specific and is only appropriate when actual damage has occurred.
5. **Promise of non-recurrence:** the apologizer commits him/herself to not having the offense happen again, situation-specific and less frequent than the other strategies.
6. **Deferral of blame:** (not included as a separate category in Cohen and Olshtain) Blame a third entity or the situation, or redirect blame to the person affected by the act

Appendix D: Classification of Refusals (Beebe et al. 1990: 72-73)

I. Direct

- A. Performative (e.g., “I refuse”)
- B. Non-performative statement
 - 1. “No”
 - 2. Negative willingness/ability
(“I can’t.” “I won’t”. “I don’t think so.”)

II. Indirect

- A. Statement of regret (e.g., “I’m sorry . . .”; “I feel terrible . . .”)
- B. Wish (e.g., “I wish I could help you . . .”)
- C. Excuse, reason, explanation
(e.g., “My children will be home that nigh.”;
“I have a headache.”)
- D. Statement of alternative
 - 1. I can do X instead of Y
(e.g., “I’d rather . . .” “I’d prefer . . .”)
 - 2. Why don’t you do X instead of Y
(e.g., “Why don’t you ask someone else?”)
- E. Set condition for future or past acceptance (e.g., “If you had asked me earlier, I would have.”)
- F. Promise of future acceptance (e.g., “I’ll do it next time”; “I promise I’ll . . .” or “Next time I’ll . . .”—using “will” of promise or “promise”)
- G. Statement of principle (e.g., “I never do business with friends.”)
- H. Statement of philosophy (e.g., “One can’t be too careful.”)
- I. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor
 - 1. Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (e.g., “I won’t be any fun tonight” to refuse an invitation)
 - 2. Gilt trip (e.g., waitress to customers who want to sit a while: “I can’t make a living off people who just order coffee.”)
 - 3. Criticize the request/requester, etc. (statement of negative feeling or opinion); insult/attack (e.g., “Who do you think you are?”; “That’s a terrible idea!”)
 - 4. Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request.
 - 5. Let interlocutor off the hook (e.g., “Don’t worry about it.” “That’s okay.” “You don’t have to.”)
 - 6. Self-defense (e.g., “I’m trying my best.” “I’m doing all I can do.” “I no do nutting wrong.”)
- J. Acceptance that functions as a refusal
 - 1. Unspecific or indefinite reply
 - 2. Lack of enthusiasm
- K. Avoidance
 - 1. Nonverbal
 - a. Silence
 - b. Hesitation
 - c. Do nothing
 - d. Physical departure
 - 2. Verbal
 - a. Topic switch

- b. Joke
- c. Repetition of part of request, etc. (e.g., “Monday?”)
- d. Postponement (e.g., “I’ll think about it.”)
- e. Hedging (e.g., “Gee, I don’t know.” “I’m not sure.”)

Appendix E: Summary of MDCT Responses by Native Speakers

	Reg	Gen	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12
P1 MichR	N	M	C	C	A	B	B	A	C	A	A	A	C	A
P2 Matt	MW abr	M	C	C	A	B	A	C	C	C	A	C	C	D
P3 Leif	Wabr	M	C	C	B	C	C	C	C	C	D	D	C	D
P4 Mich L	S	M	C	C	A	C	B	C	C	C	A	A	C	D
P5 StevenB	S	M	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	D
P6 Gerald	W	M	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
P7 Kai	S	M	A	B	A	A	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	D
P8 Cyn	S	F	C	C	C	C	B	C	C	C	A	A	C	D
P9 HeathF	S	F	C	C	A	C	B	D	C	C	A	D	C	C
P10 Pagon	S	F	C	B	C	C	C	A	C	C	D	C	C	C
P11 Andrea	N	F	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	D	C	D
P12 Marnie	S	F	C	C	B	C	C	C	C	C	C	D	C	D
P13 Adrian	S	F	C	C	A	C	C	C	C	C	A	A	C	D
P14 Tracey	S	F	C	B	B	B	A	A	C	C	A	A	C	D

P15 Brandy	S	F	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	D
P16 Heath D	Wabr oad	F	C	C	A	C	C	B	C	C	A	D	C	C
P17 Melissa	S	F	C	C	A	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	D

Appendix F: Summary of MDCT Responses by Non-native Speakers

	Q 1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12
P1	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	B
P2	C	C	A	C	B	D	C	D	C	C	C	B
P3	B	B	C	B	A	A	C	C	D	B	C	B
P4	B	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	B
P5	C	B	C	C	B	C	B	C	A	A	C	D
P6	B	C	D	C	C	C	C	C	A	B	C	C
P7	C	B	A	B	C	C	C	C	B	C	C	B
P8	C	C	A	C	A	C	C	A	A	D	C	B
P9	C	B	B	B	B	C	C	C	A	A	C	B
P10	C	B	B	C	D	B	D	B	D	D	C	C
P11	A	D	B	A	C	C	C	D	C	D	C	A
P12	C	B	B	B	A	C	C	C	A	D	B	A
P13	C	C	B	C	B	C	C	C	C	A	C	A
P14	C	B	A	C	C	C	C	A	A	B	C	A
P15	C	B	C	D	A	A	C	C	A	C	C	B
P16	C	B	A	B	C	C	C	A	D	D	C	D

P17	C	C	B	C	B	C	B	C	A	B	C	C
F above/ M below												
P18	B	A	A	A	A	A	C	A	A	B	A	A
P19	C	C	B	C	B	C	C	C	D	B	C	A
P20	C	C	B	A	D	C	B	D	A	B	D	D
P21	C	B	D	D	D	C	C	D	A	C	C	B
P22	C	B	D	D	C	D	C	A	A	B	C	D
P23	B	C	B	D	D	C	C	C	C	B	C	C
P24	B	B	A	C	C	C	C	C	A	B	C	C
P25	C	B	B	A	C	C	C	C	A	C	C	C
P26	C	C	B	C	C	C	C	D	C	C	C	D
P27	B	B	B	B	C	C	D	C	B	C	C	D
P28	D	C	C	C	C	C	D	C	C	D	C	D
P29	B	B	B	A	A	B	A	B	A	A	C	D
P30	A	B	B	A	A	A	C	A	A	B	D	A
P31	B	B	C	C	C	C	C	C	A	C	C	D
Most Common Answers	19 C	17 B 12 C	15 B	15 C	14 C	23 C	24 C	18 C	17 A	11 B	27 C	9 B
Least Common Answers	9 B 2 A 1 D	1 A 1 D	7 C 7 A 3 D	6 B 6 A 3 D	7 A 6 B 4 D	4 A 2 B 2 D	3 D 3 B 1 A	6 A 5 D 2 B	8 C 4 D 2 B	10 C 6 D 4 A	2 D 1 B 1 A	7 A 6 C 9 D

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