“I NEED YOU TO SEND ME THE HOMEWORK PLEASE”: AN ANALYSIS OF ADULT ESL LEARNERS’ REQUESTIVE EMAILS TO FACULTY

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submitted by **NİLAY DİNÇ ALTUN** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Arts in English Language Teaching, the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI
Dean
Graduate School of Social Sciences _____

Prof. Dr. Çiğdem SAĞIN ŞİMŞEK
Head of Department
Department of Foreign Language Education _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hale IŞIK GÜLER
Supervisor
Department of Foreign Language Education _____

Examining Committee Members:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Betil ERÖZ TUĞA (Head of the Examining Committee)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Foreign Language Education _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hale IŞIK GÜLER (Supervisor)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Foreign Language Education _____

Assist. Prof. Dr. Betül BAL GEZEGİN
On Dokuz Mayıs University
Department of English Language Teaching _____

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last Name: Nilay Dinç-Altun

Signature:

ABSTRACT

"I NEED YOU TO SEND ME THE HOMEWORK PLEASE": AN ANALYSIS OF ADULT ESL LEARNERS' REQUESTIVE EMAILS TO FACULTY

DİNÇ-ALTUN, NİLAY
M.A., Department of English Language Teaching
Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hale Işık-Güler

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The study at hand investigates adult ESL learners' request emails to the faculty. The study aims to reveal the request strategies and the use of email components in the authentic emails of adult ESL learners when sending a request email to the faculty. For this purpose, 145 naturally occurring request emails were collected from the intermediate level students at an adult public school in Washington DC. The study examines the level of directness, internal and external modification, forms of address, request perspectives and email components. The analysis was performed based on an adapted model of the CCSARP framework developed by (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The email components were analyzed with the adapted model of the framework developed by (Zhu, 2012a). The data were coded and analyzed with the MAXQDA2020 software package. The findings demonstrate the participants' tendency to use direct request strategies and the lexical modifier '*please*' to mitigate their requests. Additionally, a more informal tone is identified in greetings and closings, which are preferred in most email messages. All in all, the findings highlighted the pragmalinguistic skills that adult ESL learners need to develop in order to send a formal request email to faculty and suggest that integrating digital literacy and the pragmatic aspect of language into ESL curricula can better serve the needs of adult ESL learners.

Keywords: Emails, Requests, Requestive Emails, Pragmatics, ESL

ÖZ

"I NEED YOU TO SEND ME THE HOMEWORK PLEASE": İKİNCİ DİL OLARAK İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENEN YETİŞKİNLERİN ÖĞRETİM GÖREVLİLERİNE GÖNDERDİKLERİ RİCA E-POSTALARININ ANALİZİ

DİNÇ-ALTUN, NİLAY
Yüksek Lisans, İngiliz Dili Öğretimi Bölümü
Tez Yöneticisi: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hale Işık-Güler

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Bu çalışma, ikinci dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen yetişkinlerin, öğretim elemanlarına gönderdikleri rica e-postalarını araştırmaktadır. Çalışma yetişkin İngiliz dili öğrencilerinin öğretim elemanlarına gönderdikleri gerçek rica e-postalarda kullanılan rica stratejileri ile e-posta öğelerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu maksatla, Washington DC'de bulunan ve yetişkinlere eğitim veren bir devlet okulundaki dilde orta düzeydeki öğrencilerden 145 doğal oluşumlu rica e-postası toplanmıştır. Çalışma, doğrudanlık seviyesi, iç ve dış niteleyiciler, hitap biçimi, rica söylemi açısı ile e-posta öğelerini incelemektedir. Analiz, Blum-Kulka, House ve Kasper (1989) tarafından geliştirilen CCSARP çerçevesinin uyarlanmış modeline dayanarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. E-posta öğeleri ise Zhu (2012) tarafından geliştirilen çerçevenin uyarlanmış modeli ile incelenmiştir. Veriler, MAXQDA2020 yazılım paketi ile kodlanmış ve analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, katılımcıların doğrudan rica stratejilerini ve ricalarını hafifletmek amacıyla '*lütfen*' sözcüksel niteleyicisini kullanma eğiliminde olduklarını göstermiştir. Ayrıca, e-postaların birçoğunda başlangıç ve bitirme ifadelerinin bulunduğu ve bu ifadelerde daha gündelik bir üslup kullanıldığı saptanmıştır. Sonuç olarak, çalışmadan elde edilen bulgular, yetişkin dil öğrencilerinin öğretim elemanlarına resmi bir rica e-postası gönderebilmek için geliştirmesi gereken

edimdilbilimsel becerileri vurgulamakta ve dijital okuryazarlık ile dilin edimsel yönünün ikinci dil olarak İngilizce müfredatlarına eklenmesinin yetişkin dil öğrencilerinin ihtiyaçlarına daha iyi hizmet edebileceğini önermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: E-posta, Rica, Rica E-postaları, Edimbilim, İkinci Dil Olarak İngilizce

To every single heart that misses being 'home'

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CALL	Computer Assisted Language Learning
CCSARP	Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project
DCT	Discourse-completion task
ESL	English as a Second Language
FN	First Name
FTA	Face-Threatening Acts
H	Hearer
HS	High School
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LN	Last Name
NNS	Non-native Speakers
S	Speaker
SLIFE	Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"A single word can brighten the face
of one who knows the value of words.
Ripened in silence, a single word
acquires a great energy for work."

– Sufi Poet Yunus Emre (ca.1308/1989)

1.1. Presentation

This thesis aims to explore, analyze and understand the request email messages of second language learners living as immigrants in the United States of America.

This introductory chapter starts with the background of the study followed by an explanation of the aim and significance of the study. Finally, the research questions are presented.

1.2. Background

Since the beginning of the 21st century, emails have been the most popular communication tool for Internet users (Nie & Erbring, 2002) and they have been used for various purposes, including professional and social interactions.

As a natural result of this rapidly growing technology, communication styles between students and teachers have also moved to the most convenient tool, namely email. It is now accepted as an appropriate tool for formal correspondence; therefore, the number of emails sent from students to their professors has increased (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005; Martin et al., 1999a). It should be noted that writing an email to the professor may not as easy as it seems because email communication involves both oral and written features, which makes it a hybrid discourse (Chen, 2006; Maynor, 1994).

This is due to this fact that when writing an email, there are various dynamics to consider, such as timing, power balance, and the social statuses of the sender and receiver. Hence, the email writing process may be more challenging than it appears to be, especially when writing to someone in a 'higher' position. As Chen (2006) indicated, "they have to follow the standards of appropriateness set by those who are on the dominant side in order to communicate successfully" (p. 36).

When talking about the change of the medium between the student and the teacher, it is important to emphasize that this shift has had significant implications for second language (L2) learners. Email communication has the advantage of not having an accent in the message, which may hinder communication and eliminate the pressure of constant language production as occurs in face-to-face communication (Bloch, 2002). However, in addition to the advantage of it, L2 learners also face difficulties caused by the cross-cultural differences between their L2 and first languages (L1), which can also result in miscommunication (Thomas, 1983). L2 learners need to have high pragmatic competence and awareness (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011) in order not to be misunderstood or misinterpreted in their emails.

According to Biesenbach-Lucas (2006), second language learners have similar difficulties in writing emails in comparison to face-to-face interaction. First of all, they may feel that they need to try to ensure the grammatical accuracy of their written work; however, in addition, they need to pay attention to many different elements such as identity work, social relations and ideologies. Moreover, writing an appropriate email requires pragmatic competence in the second language. Second language learners need to have a command of the language and be familiar with the culture, including the social norms. However, as previous studies have shown, second language learners usually lack pragmatic competence, which they need in order to have electronic academic communication (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, 2018; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996).

With regard to adult L2 learners, not being a digital native presents another challenge. As the literature suggests, adults – especially older adults – may not keep up with the fast-growing technology. Thus, they fall behind with digital engagement (Hale et al., 2010; Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008). The lack of digital literacy is

one of the main reasons for many adults not using the Internet or Internet tools (Broady et al., 2010).

Moreover, there are community-related differences as well. Underserved communities are likely to lag in digital skills due to insufficient access to digital devices and hence a lack of related skills (Seo et al., 2019). Therefore, digital literacy programs ought to be offered for adults who might have less access to technology, education or both (Jaeger et al., 2012; Seo et al., 2017).

To serve this need, *Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School*, the main data collection site for the study at hand, provides primarily immigrant adults in Washington DC with life skills including English language in the ESL context via a curricula equipped with a digital literacy component. Due to the sad fact that immigrant groups are likely to feel as if they are 'outsiders,' obtaining employment or a degree and feeling accepted is more challenging for those who have moved to a country where another language is spoken and the entire system is different from the immigrant's home country. In order to integrate into the community, the adult immigrant community needs to learn new tools, develop new skills and apply them in their everyday lives. Therefore, along with language teaching, at this school, the technology component was integrated into the ESL curricula. The school is a pioneer in conducting digital literacy classes combined with language learning while teaching immigrant adults. The lower proficiency levels are introduced with computers starting with computer hardware such as the mouse or keyboard, and students acquire the essential skills from there as their level increases. Since email communication is an integral part of daily communication in both formal and informal contexts in the country, to be able to send an email and know the so-called 'etiquette' has become a skill that needs to be developed for communication, in particular for formal communication. Like every other skill, it requires practice, and for this reason, students are encouraged to send emails to their teachers at school.

There are various reasons to send an email for students and teachers such as asking for information, guidance and feedback (Waldeck et al., 2001). In fact, in the first years of the 21st century, email was found to be a medium used in one-third of communications between the student and faculty (Bippus et al., 2003). After the

appearance of smartphones in our lives, this number has most probably increased due to young people constantly using their smartphones for many purposes, including sending emails to their professors (Alsayed et al., 2020). The reasons for sending an email to the faculty for a student is usually mostly academic, such as obtaining information, requesting advice, and communicating information about assignments or absence (Marbach-Ad & Sokolove, 2001; Martin et al., 1999b; Poling, 1994). A considerable amount of these emails consists of requests consistent with face-to-face communication purposes.

The purpose of sending a request email may be interactional or transactional in nature. (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2018). A student's intent is not always to ask for information or help but to establish or maintain a social relationship with the teacher (Yule, 2010). Non-native speakers especially use email messages as a tool to maintain social relationships (Bloch, 2002). Because there is a power distance between the student and the teacher, students are expected to use the pragmatically appropriate language in recognition of the teacher's position and to select the correct pragmatic and sociolinguistic elements with their politeness level and writing style (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005, 2007; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996). In fact, this makes writing an email for a language learner more challenging because second language learners are required to improve their pragmatic competence in the target language (Zhu, 2012b). Therefore, managing an email in an academic discourse for adult second language learners is not an easy task for a number of reasons.

This study investigates the request emails of second language learners written to faculty members. The analysis of the research is twofold. First, the requests which were formulated via email are discussed. Later, email use is examined in terms of structure and appropriateness. More specifically, the research explores the email requests in the English production of adult second language learners to their teachers and addresses the email formulations, the use of requestive strategies and pragmatic knowledge in the second language.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

It is an undeniable fact that pragmatics truly matters for language learners as pragmatic mistakes could cause communication to deteriorate more than grammatical, lexical or

phonetic errors (Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1998). Pragmatic mistakes may cause miscommunications and stereotypes (for immigrant populations), which may have short or long-term effects (Taguchi & Sykes, 2013). Since this is also true for communication via technological media, language learners have to learn to be pragmatically acceptable in the contexts that are the results of globalization, including computer-mediated communication (Herraiz-Martínez & Sánchez-Hernández, 2018), because technology is not independent of communication. In fact, it is said that it "shape[s] the conversation process" (Gonzalez-Lloret, 2019, p.116). Therefore, with the realization that email has been at the heart of the communication of the modern world, the need and interest in pragmatic studies on email messages has naturally increased. Email is now of primary importance in academia due to its convenience for students when requiring feedback, clarification or permission (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007).

Speech acts on academic email messages have been the center of attention, as can be expected. Due to the nature of the reasons for academic correspondence, requests are some of the most observed speech acts in educational contexts. Pragmatic ability and awareness are required in requests to express and interpret communication intentions (Sykes, 2018). As stated by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2015), language learners need to be able to complete tasks and achieve goals appropriately by taking sociocultural contexts into consideration. However, this requirement becomes more complex when language learners need to interpret or express themselves in the target language (Bardovi-Harlig & Stringer, 2017). In addition to the difficulty of making appropriate requests in the target language, putting such a request into an email message necessitates extra attention since sending an appropriate email is considered to be a part of being 'polite', tactful and acknowledged as proper. Even advanced-level language learners underutilize pragmatic features, such as face-saving strategies or mitigators to soften requests (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006; Bloch, 2002; Hendriks, 2010). Moreover, it appears that the learners do not have the pragmatic competence to make the linguistic distinction of writing emails to others of socially higher status/power such as their professors (Bloch, 2002; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Zhu, 2012b). When students send emails to their professors, they are likely to neglect the asymmetrical status with their professors after establishing an institutional relationship (Salazar-Campillo & Codina-Espurz, 2018). Previous studies all focused on the

request use in email messages of college students who exhibit characteristics distinct than other adults. This gap may raise questions about the generalization of emails of adults since a large group of language learners are not included. The differences, as well as the similarities, should be discussed for a further and better understanding.

The inevitable use of technology-mediated communication in life has brought new research needs as well as terms such as 'cyberpragmatics,' as defined by Yus (2011), so as to analyze how information is created and interpreted in the context of the Internet. Within an email, there are social dynamics and power relations that affect the style of an email. The etiquette of the email gains even more importance within these dynamics. Writing an email in the appropriate format is also important and needs to be taught to second language learners who are on their ways to develop the pragmatic competence. Adult ESL learners are uniquely diverse in this regard; hence, understanding their patterns could be a valuable contribution to the literature.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

Emails have been studied since the 1980s. With the dramatic rise in the use of emails, the scope and number of these studies continues to increase. Likewise, speech acts, requests in particular, have been a popular topic among researchers. Since the late 1980s, request use in emails has also been investigated many times, including a number of studies on requests of students to faculty (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Chen, 2015; Félix-Brasdefer, 2012; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010). However, the participants of these studies were teenagers or college students, which may limit the generalization capacity of the results to other adult learners. College students have their unique capabilities and socio-educational backgrounds, which are somewhat different from other ESL learners such as working-class immigrants, the foci of the study at hand. According to the U.S. Department of Education, in the United States, English language learners comprise 40 percent of the adult education population with the majority of these adult ESL learners aged between 25 and 44 (Get the Facts on Adult English Language Programs | Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, n.d.). Therefore, the email use and request use of college students might not be consistent with most of the population.

Of great significance is the provision of insights into the request emails of adult ESL learners to faculty. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is a paucity of papers on request emails of adult ESL learners. The thesis at hand aims to contribute to ameliorate this situation by analyzing adult ESL students' emails to their teachers where the students use request markers.

The purpose of the study is to conduct a deep analysis of the request emails of a culturally/linguistically diverse group of adult ESL learners to faculty. The research aims to produce findings that lead to a better understanding of the request strategies of adult ESL learners and their email use.

1.5. Research Questions

The research has been designed to adapt a data-driven pragmatic approach to understand adult ESL learners' email forms and pragmatic competence in the second language and investigate the elements of email and the request speech acts within their emails to identify how the structure and format of email requests to faculty affect its level of politeness.

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the *subject choices* of adult ESL learners in formal request emails?
2. What *forms of opening and closing* do adult ESL learners employ when sending emails to their teachers?
3. What *forms of address* do adult ESL learners use in formal emails when they send emails to the faculty?
4. What is the *level of directness* observed in adult ESL learners' email messages to the faculty?
5. What *internal modifiers* do adult ESL learners use to mitigate the illocutionary force of requests in an email?
6. What *external modifiers* are used by adult ESL learners as mitigating devices in request emails?

7. What *forms of request perspective* are employed by adult ESL learners in request emails to their teachers?

8. To what extent do adult ESL learners use 'email etiquette' in formal emails when sending an email to the faculty?

1.6. Significance of the Study

Although there are studies that pertain to request emails to faculty, such studies have mostly been conducted on adult university students mostly sharing typical features such as age or education level. Therefore, the results do not always reflect the language and email use of other adult groups who do not have those distinctive features. This study has a completely different participant group which is quite diverse and unique at the time of this research.

The data collection method selected for the study brings another significance the study. Since the naturally occurring data collection method was selected for the study, the researcher had the ability to see the real picture of emails and avoid the observer's paradox. The students were not expected to make a request in an email as they would through DCT; therefore, there was no potential pressure of the research or the researcher on them. The data were not generated and the participants used their natural sentences or expressions without feeling the obligation of completing the task.

This study aims to further the understanding of adult ESL learners' email styles by meticulously examining the components of their emails, including the subject, types of modification, and opening and closing sequences. With the help of the examination, the aim is to reveal the knowledge of ESL learners from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds about email. This examination may help educators, curriculum specialists, program developers, test makers and administrators by providing a deeper understanding of what adult learners have and need. Thanks to the data acquired from a diverse group of participants, the results may contribute to guiding the development of curricula, courses and teachers in similar contexts.

The study also focuses on the requestive speech act use of adult ESL learners in their emails to their teachers. This investigation may uncover to what extent they use the

various forms in addition to what strategies they prefer, which may pave the way for making teaching materials more suitable and appropriate to the needs of adult learners.

1.7. Definition of Terms

External modifiers	Supportive moves that are in the context that the request head act exists
Face	A person's public self-image
Face threatening act (FTA)	Actions or utterances which represent a threat to another person's self-image
Illocutionary force	The speech act such as 'request' or 'warning' performed with the utterance
Interlanguage pragmatics (also known as Second Language Pragmatics)	The study of how L2 pragmatics develops focusing on how learners acquire the L2 pragmatic system in time
Internal modifiers	Optional elements within the request head act
Maxims	The assumptions in conversation connected to the cooperative principle
Mitigating devices	Utterances to soften the imposition of the request
Negative face	The need or desire to be independent and free from imposition
Politeness	To show awareness and consideration of another person's face or public self-image
Positive face	The need or desire to be connected, to belong, to be a member of a group
Pragmatics	The study of speaker meaning and how more is communicated than what is said
Speech act	Actions such as 'promising' or 'requesting' performed by a speaker with an utterance

Definitions are adapted from Yule (2006); Blum-Kulka (1989).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Presentation

In this chapter of the study, the key principles in the literature, hypotheses, methods and empirical results that are central to this thesis are covered. First of all, pragmatics and interlanguage pragmatics are defined and explained with the foundational studies in the literature. Later, the speech act studies with a focus on requests are touched upon. After the discussion of two primary data collection methods, a chronicle of studies on email request studies between the students and faculty is presented.

2.2. Pragmatics

In communication, merely understanding the meaning of a word or expression would be insufficient. The hearer or receiver also needs to recognize what the speaker or sender means. "The study of what speakers mean, or 'speaker meaning,' is called pragmatics" (Yule, 2006, p. 112).

It is also defined by Crystal (2008) as "in modern linguistics, it has come to be applied to the study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, and the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on other participants in an act of communication" (p. 379). Probably one of the most straightforward definitions is made by Leech (1983) as 'the study of how utterances have meaning in situations' (p. x).

Utterance meaning may be said to arise through grammatically correct utterances, but those utterances are not independent of social, cultural or contextual factors. The speaker or sender's intention may be interpreted by the listener or receiver with their

own comment through the filters of sociocultural or other contextual factors. Leech (1983) explains this as interpersonal rhetoric; the sender or speaker acts as a social actor who maintains their interpersonal relationship with the listener or reader while completing the communication task.

After the preliminary work of Austin (1962), meaning has been conceptualized beyond what is said, and with that, the first step to accept pragmatics as a discipline was taken. He suggested that speech could perform actions, which means that speech is not only statements. Later, speech acts were proposed by Searle (1969) as the nucleus of discourse, where he points out the three levels of analysis of speech acts. In support of these theories, Grice (1989) defined the notion of a speech act as "...the nature of which is to be explained by a specification of the constitutive rules which govern each such act and on which the possibility of performing the act that depends" (p. 19).

There are also other definitions of pragmatics suggested by other scholars. It has been defined as the theory of linguistic communication (Fraser, 1983) or, as defined by Wierzbicka (1991), "a linguistic interaction between 'I' and 'you' (p. 5). Wierzbicka (1991) explains the concept with an example of the words 'ask' and 'question.' While the word 'question' is explained in a dictionary, the sentence type of it is discussed in a grammar book. The question "What time is it?" is explained in the chapter of a grammar book pertaining to interrogative constructions. However, 'indirect questions' constructed as "I don't know what time it is." would be found in a different chapter of the same book. Moreover, the question "Do you know what time it is?" would be explained (if at all) in the chapter related to discourse strategies. That means these three devices, words, grammatical structures and pragmatic devices, are discussed as if they were different from each other and did not have anything in common. On the contrary, they all have pragmatic meanings, and the interactional purpose in a speech is very important to understand it (Wierzbicka, 1991).

Pragmatics is associated with the meaning of the speaker and interpretation of the utterance (Buchanan & Seligman, 2013; Huckin & Bhatia, 1995). This means that merely producing comprehensible sets of sounds is insufficient and it requires the hearer to perform a reaction. Therefore, understanding an utterance is a complex

process (Politzer-Ahles et al., 2013). It includes a rushed combination of the elements of lexical and compositional semantics as well as pragmatics and discourse.

Pragmatics is explained not only in the linguistics field but also in other disciplines. It is, for instance, defined as a communicative action occurring in the sociocultural context (Kasper & Rose, 2001). The term is also explained within philosophy (Strawson, 1964), for example, termed as an outline of presuppositions in the first language that can provide communicative actions based on a non-foundational universalism (Habermas, 1970).

In addition to the views that take the social constraints into account on utterance production, some scholars adopt the cognitive approach to pragmatics and focus on the interpretation of the hearer and the reactions that they may produce. They define pragmatics as explaining how a hearer solves ambiguities, completes elliptical sentences or recognizes intended references or illocutionary force (Sperber & Wilson, 1987).

The relatively recent manner of definition of pragmatics pertains to meaning in interaction and involves contributions of both parties (hearer and speaker) and also the utterance itself (Buchanan & Seligman, 2013; Filik & Leuthold, 2008; Hagoort et al., 2004; Kuperberg et al., 2000; Thomas, 2014).

From the pedagogical perspective, pragmatics has been defined in the scope of the sociocultural context where communicative action has the implication of various kinds of discourse and the participation in speech events with different complexities and lengths as well as the use of speech acts (Kasper & Rose, 2001). After extensive studies on learning pragmatics in the second language, the focus of a number of recent studies has shifted to the teaching of pragmatics in the target language. In her extensive research, Taguchi (2015) examined 58 studies performed in the last 30 years on teaching pragmatics in the target language. One of the conclusions of that study is the significant effect of teaching pragmatics for the learners of the target language.

With regard to conducting and comprehending a speech act, interlanguage pragmatics is generally concerned with the variety of variations and divergences between non-native and native speakers. Since contact occurs between non-native speakers and

native speakers, it is clear that communication is taking place between individuals of various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Needless to say, when interlocutors come from a diverse cultural and linguistic context, their differences or dissimilarities them become apparent in their language.

The definition of pragmatic competence is primarily derived from Hymes's (1972) language model, where he suggests that language usage should be acceptable in social contexts. It has such a significant role in language that without its rules, the sole grammar rules would be meaningless (Hymes, 1972).

With this in mind, it would not be wrong to say that one of the most critical skills in mastering a foreign language or a second language is pragmatic ability. Considering many second language learners in the world who endeavor to adapt and blend into the society in which they live, along with their language learning, developing pragmatic competence becomes crucial for them. In fact, pragmatic incompetence is claimed to cause more severe ramifications than grammatical errors since native speakers are more likely to be offended by pragmatic errors (Thomas, 1983). Additionally, language learners who engage with speakers of a target language must be pragmatically appropriate to avoid being inappropriate, disrespectful or even insulting (Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1991). This argument brings the discussion to the topic of interlanguage pragmatics, which is also named as the second language, L2 or foreign language learners' pragmatic competence.

2.3. Interlanguage Pragmatics

Selinker (1972) presented the concept of interlanguage for the social dimensions of second language learning. He defines interlanguage as a linguistic structure or variant of language that emerges from learners' attempts to generate the target language norm.

Selinker (1972) defines five categories of psycholinguistic mechanisms that underpin language behavior within the concept of interlanguage: (1) *Language transfer:* the patterns of native language observed in interlanguage; (2) *Transfer of training*: the linguistic rules or components learned from the training procedures appearing in interlanguage because of the training that the learners received; (3) *Second language teaching strategies*: the outcome of learners' attitudes to learning a target language;

(4) *Second-language exchange strategies*: learners' approaches to communicating with native speakers of the target language; and (5) *The effects of overgeneralization* of target language rules and semantic aspects on target language materials.

The language learners' variations of target language skills have been explained by the principle of interlanguage. Interlanguage grammar, for example, is the internal grammar of learners' target language formed through accommodation and integration with native speakers of the target language (Corder, 1978). Interlanguage pragmatics is introduced as a way to explain learners' pragmatic information in the target language (Kasper, 1989).

Interlanguage pragmatics is described by (Kasper & Dahl, 1991) as non-native speakers' interpretation and production of speech acts. Kasper (1992) sees interlanguage pragmatics as unstable, insufficient, permeable pragmatic intelligence of L2 learners, while Junko (1999) sees it as pragmatic components of learners' imperfect mastery of the second language linked to functions of speech actions based on the features of interlanguage defined by Ellis (1985). Interlanguage pragmatics, according to Schauer (2004), is defined as the learning, comprehension, and development of contextually relevant language by L2 learners. It investigates how non-native speakers understand and carry out linguistic action in the target language, as well as how they learn L2 pragmatic knowledge (Kasper, 1992). Interlanguage pragmatics is divided into two broad categories by Kasper & Rose (2002): i) the study about how language learners comprehend and produce target language action, and ii) the study of how language learners improve their ability to interpret and produce the target language.

Second language pragmatics, also known as interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), is a sub-discipline of SLA and is classified as "the study of nonnative speakers' pragmatic information use and acquisition" (Kasper & Rose, 1999, p. 81). When a language student wants to produce an utterance, the student must first decide whether the utterances are appropriate for the situation. The first or native language has a massive impact on appropriate use in the second language, and only knowing the structure and vocabulary is insufficient to acquire a good command of the language. For language learners, acquiring pragmatic skills is one of the essential elements of their learning

because it pertains to developing the ability to deal with meaning as expressed by the speaker and perceived by the listener. They need those skills to understand people's intended messages, perceptions or objectives, as well as the actions they perform, such as making a request (Yule, 2003).

The scholars of some of the early pioneering works in this field were the first who empirically studied the concepts of speech act theory across a variety of languages, defining cross-cultural and linguistic distinctions that could hinder communication in the second language (Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1998; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Thomas, 1983; Weizman, 1989).

The first 20 years of ILP research provided valuable analytical evidence, showing that structural, discursive and pragmatic aspects, for example, did not develop in an aligned manner. Those studies also revealed that there were differences between linguistic proficiency and the pragmatic competence of non-native speakers of English, even in the advanced speakers (Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1991; Blum-Kulka, 1982; Thomas, 1983). After the seminal work of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), many studies that focus on requests and apologies were carried out using their framework. Since the modified version of the framework has been used for this study, the project will be further explained in the following chapter.

2.4. Speech Act Theory and Requests

Speech is defined as statements or sounds, and words that come together to convey meaning. However, Austin (1962) claimed that speech could also perform an action. When one says, 'I'll be there at six.', it is more than speaking; it is also promising, which means that with one utterance, the speech act of promising is also being performed (Yule, 2006). This new perspective of analyzing meaning, which is depicted by the term speech acts, is also defined by Oishi (2006) as 'in uttering a sentence, that is, in utilizing linguistic conventions, the speaker with an associated intention performs a linguistic act to the hearer' (p. 1).

Speech acts are defined as recognizing "the type of 'action' performed by a speaker with the utterance" (Yule, 2006, p. 118). The concept of speech acts was introduced

first by Austin (1962) as the minimal unit of discourse. It means saying something with the aim of doing something (Austin, 1962). Actions such as commanding, requesting, informing or questioning are called speech acts. Later, Austin described the speech acts on three levels: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary acts can be defined as "uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference" (p. 108). Illocutionary acts are "utterances which have a certain (conventional) force" as done when apologizing, refusing, inviting, or warning (p. 108). Perlocutionary acts refer to "what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading" (p. 109). For instance, a typical example, as restated by Pan (2010), is that when the sentence 'It's hot in here!' is uttered, the sentence itself is the first level, locution, whereas the meaning is illocution which can be 'I need fresh air!'. The perlocutionary act could be someone should open the window (Pan, 2010).

The illocutionary act, which is the focus of this study, is classified into five categories within the taxonomy of illocutionary acts, which are representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives (Searle, 1969). Representatives are the illocutionary acts that represent a situation or a set of circumstances. 'Claiming,' 'describing,' 'telling,' 'stating,' 'suggesting' and 'hypothesizing' are examples of representatives. Saying "I acknowledge that I promise to buy you a new car" or reporting to a colleague, "I require my students to attend all the classes" are examples of representatives. Directives are the acts designed to have the addressee perform an action. 'Commanding,' 'ordering,' challenging,' 'inviting' and 'requesting' fall into this category. Saying "Please be here on time" is an example of a directive act. When categorizing the acts, to whom they are uttered is also important. Referring to the previous example, while "I require my students to attend all the classes" is a representative act if you are reporting it to someone else, the same statement is a directive act when saying it directly to students. Commissives are acts designed to have the speaker to perform an action, such as 'intending,' 'promising,' 'vowing' and 'threatening.' Expressives are the acts that define the mental state or feelings of the speaker. 'Apologizing,' 'congratulating,' thanking' and 'welcoming' are expressive acts. Finally, declaratives are the acts that bring about a change in some way to the situation they refer to. 'Baptizing,' 'bidding,' 'blessing' and 'firing' are examples of declarations.

The same proposition may occur as in different illocutions; therefore, it shows how a proposition is interpreted. As recited by Barron (2003), the preposition “Jane will go to bed” might be uttered as a respective order “Jane, go to bed”, a question “Jane, will you go to bed?” or a prediction “Jane will go to bed” (p. 12).

One of the other notions that needs to be discussed is the term directness. It is accepted with the speech act theory that an utterance means something that is more than or different from what it says. Although the distinction is evident by the speech act theories, defining indirectness is more complicated (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989).

The directness between structure and function also identifies the types of speech act. The term conventionality as put forward by Searle (1979) claims that the intelligibility of an utterance depends on the convention. The three levels of directness explained by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) are as follows:

1. The direct level of requests is syntactically explicit; for instance, the requests are stated with imperatives or with hedged performatives (Fraser, 1983).
2. The conventionally indirect level strategies refer to contextual preconditions that are necessary for an action while they are conventionalized in the language.
3. The non-conventionally indirect level strategies refer to the partial reference to the element that is necessary to perform the action. They also refer to clues within the context.

Direct speech acts are defined as the acts where the meaning is as said by the speaker, whereas with indirect speech acts, the speaker might mean more than is said. If the indirect speech acts require a little inferencing to understand the underlying meanings, they are called conventionally indirect acts. However, those that require more inferencing are called non-conventionally indirect speech acts or hints. The table below presents examples of directness strategies.

Table 1 The Directness Levels of Request Strategies

Level of Directness	**Strategy**	**Example**
Direct	Mood derivable	"Bring the check please."
Conventionally indirect	Preparatory	"Can we get the check?"
Non-conventionally indirect	Strong hint	"We are ready to pay the check."

Note. Adapted from "Requests and apologies: A cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns (CCSARP)" by S. Blum-Kulka & E. Olshtain, 1984, *Applied Linguistics 5*(3), 201-202.
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Although the categorization is universal, the use of the directness strategies could differ depending on culture and language background. In her seminal research, Blum-Kulka (1984) compared the request and apology use of Australian English, French, Hebrew and Argentinian Spanish speakers. She found that while Argentinian Spanish speakers were the most direct, Australian English speakers were the least direct. Similarly, Greek speakers were found to be more direct compared to native English speakers (Pavlidou, 1994; Sifianou, 1989). Additionally, German speakers, for example, were found to be more direct in their requests compared to Danes (House & Kasper, 1987).

Requests, which are the focus of this study, are categorized as directives and have a competitive illocutionary function (Leech, 2014). They aim to benefit the speaker (or a third party) as well as mitigate the hearer. Aiming to achieve a balance between these two competing goals makes requests hearer-focused, which leads to the use of politeness strategies. Moreover, requests were defined as directives where the speaker, with their utterance, endeavors to have the hearer do something (Searle, 1979). A request is a face-threatening act that is when making a request and either the speaker's or hearer's face is threatened (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In order to mitigate the face-threatening act, strategies such as the use of modifiers are followed by the speaker or sender. Those strategies are crucial because failing to follow them may result in refusal or losing the face.

According to Austin (1962), in order for an utterance (described as performatives) to succeed, a set of felicity conditions are necessary. Austin (1962) states:

> Besides the uttering of the words of the so-called performative, a good many other things have as a general rule to be right and to go right if we are to be said to have happily brought off our action. What these are we may hope to discover by looking at and classifying types of case in which something *goes wrong* and the act-marrying, betting, bequeathing, christening, or what not-is therefore at least to some extent, a failure: the utterance is then, we may say, not indeed false but in general *unhappy*. And for this reason, we call the doctrine of the things that can be and go wrong on the occasion of such utterances, the doctrine of the Infelicities. We call the doctrine of *the things that can be and go wrong* on the occasion of such utterances, the doctrine of the *Infelicities* (p. 14).

Searle (1969) defines four conditions for requests, as follows (p. 66):

Table 2 Request Conditions

Propositional Content Condition	Future action of the hearer
Preparatory conditions	1. The hearer is able to perform the action. 2. It is not obvious to both the speaker and the hearer that the hearer will perform the action in the normal course of events of his own accord.
Sincerity condition	The speaker wants the hearer to perform the action.
Essential condition	Counts as an attempt to have the hearer perform the action.

Note. Reprinted from Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language (p. 66), by J.R. Searle, 1969, Cambridge University Press. Copyright 1969 by Cambridge University Press.

Levinson's (1983) felicity conditions classification falls into three categories: (1) the people and conditions should be suitable; (2) the procedure should be performed correctly; and (3) people should have the required intentions, emotions and thoughts.

Yule (2003) defines felicity conditions as the appropriate or expected situations for a speech act to be understood as intended. He later mentions five types of preconditions on speech acts. General conditions pertain to participants understanding the language. Content conditions relate to future actions. A promise, for instance, refers to the future action of the speaker. Preparatory conditions pertain to the appropriateness of the

speaker's authority to the circumstances of the speech act. Sincerity condition is about the genuine intention of the speaker to perform a future act. Lastly, the essential condition relates to the obligation to perform an action.

Along with the speech act theory, politeness has also been discussed in pragmatic studies. The maxim and face management approaches will be touched upon in the next chapter.

2.5. Politeness Theories and Related Key Concepts

In everyday interactions, people make use of politeness when they need to ask others to do something. Depending on the social or situational context, they employ different politeness strategies. This helps them to avoid miscommunication and conflicts. Because it becomes prominent within the scope of the thesis at hand, to understand the concept of politeness with its nature, strategies and related theories is necessary.

Although there have been debates over its definition, in everyday use, it can be defined as socially appropriate behavior. From the linguistic perspective, politeness is attributed to linguistic pragmatics, which means that representational functions of language need to be reinforced with the social functions of language (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Because speech acts are related to politeness phenomenon, politeness theories with the maxim and face management approaches will be briefly reviewed in this part of the study.

2.5.1. Grice and the Cooperative Principle

Relating politeness with pragmatics, Grice (1975) proposed the Cooperative Principles, which are also known as Gricean maxims. The maxim approach relies on his contribution to pragmatics, where he explained what people intended to say might be different from what they say. Grice describes the cooperative principle as follows "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (as cited in Yule, 2006, p. 129). The four Gricean maxims are explained below.

(i) The *quantity* maxim is about being as informative as required, not more or less. The speaker is expected to give sufficient enough of information.
(ii) The *quality* maxim is about giving true information or not saying when not sure. The speaker is expected to tell the truth and not provide with incorrect or vague information.
(iii) The *relation* maxim is about being relevant. The speaker is expected to give information that is related to the conversation.
(iv) The *manner* maxim is about being clear, orderly and brief. The speaker is expected to be clear and avoid ambiguity.

In everyday conversations, the cooperative principles may not be always in operation. These principles are not the rules to be always followed, but an overall description of the speech features that are regular expectations in conversations.

Grice has been later criticized for his principled language approach. One of the major criticisms is towards his prescriptive tone. Because it is not possible to arrange everyday interactions with those principles, it is better to have a descriptive tone rather than prescriptive one. Another major criticism is related to ignoring the cross-cultural variations. Not all cultures may have the same cooperation principles. Another criticism is related to being vague. It is possible that some maxims overlap in many incidents and putting such a taxonomy could be misleading.

In spite of harsh criticisms mentioned above and more, it is a fact that the Cooperative Principles paved the way of many approaches and studies.

2.5.2. Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory

When talking about the politeness, it is essential to mention about Brown & Levinsons's (1987) politeness theory, which would not be incorrect to be defined as the most influential theory on politeness. Their book (which was first published 1978 and reissued in 1987) provided a fundamental scheme related to face saving strategies. Their theory was based on the concept of '*face*' which was introduced by Goffman (1967). He put forward the face concept in his interpersonal communication theory. The face is defined as "an image of self-delineated in terms of approved social attributes- albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good

showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself" (Goffman, 1967, p. 5).

Brown and Levinson developed their theory based on this face concept, which they later defined it as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61). According to their theory, face is emotionally invested and therefore could be protected or lost, enhanced or maintained. To this sense, according to their theory, face involves two types of face: positive and negative face. Brown & Levinson (1987) explained the positive face and negative face as follows:

(a) negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e., freedom of action and freedom from imposition.

(b) positive face: the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by the interactants (p. 61).

While the positive face is related to one's desire to be approved of, appreciated or respected by other people, the negative face, on the other hand, refers to one's desire to keep their territory not violated.

Another important concept related to politeness that was developed by Brown and Levinson is the term Face Threatening Acts (FTAs), which are the acts that threaten the face intrinsically. These threats usually require redressing by either using a mitigator or doing a verbal fix or ending up with the communication breakdown.

Brown and Levinson proposed the following five strategies of politeness indicating the levels of politeness regarding to the FTA and redressive actions.

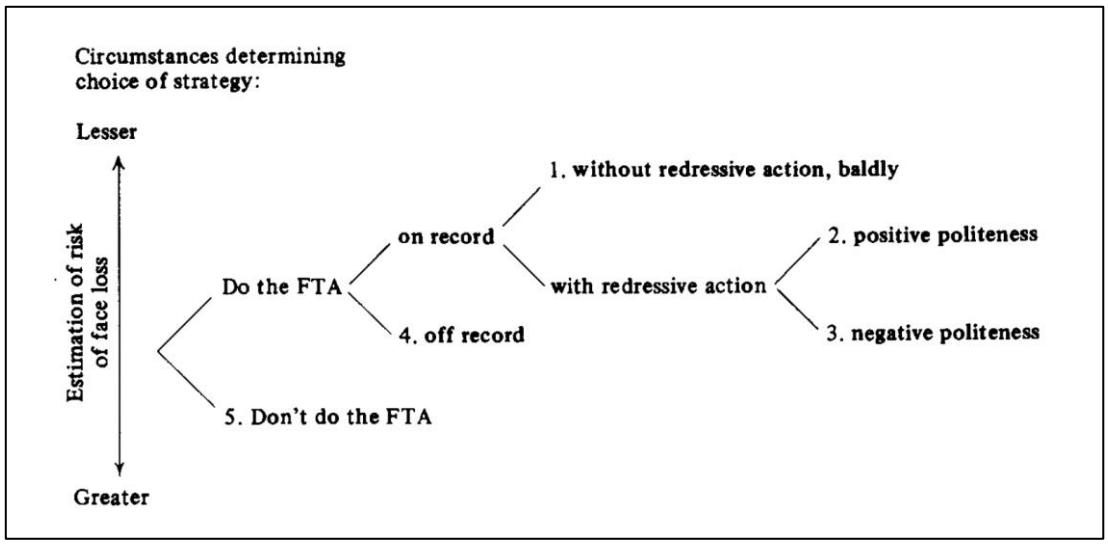


Figure 1 The FTA strategies developed by Brown & Levinson (1987)

Note. FTA strategies. Reprinted from *Politeness: Some universals in language use* (p. 60), by P. Brown & S.C. Levinson, 1987. Cambridge University Press. Copyright 1978, 1987 by Cambridge University Press.

As shown in the figure, the speaker first chooses whether or not doing the act. If doing the FTA is chosen, the second choice is either doing on record or off record strategies. Off record strategies are structured as hints and they are half-way between not doing the FTA or doing it on record. On record strategies include two options: bald on record or with redressive action. A request constructed as an imperative structure is usually doing the action baldly. With a redressive action, the speaker may choose to utilize positive or negative politeness strategies.

Despite inspiring many studies, the theory and politeness has also been harshly criticized. One of the major criticisms is being 'eurocentric' (Gu, 1990; Ji, 2000). Similarly, it was found to be biased because of centering on the western norms and not to be suitable for all data (Matsumo, 1988, Ide, 1989). Also, since the theory is focused only on the individual, it does not take social, cultural or interactional aspects of face (Matsuma, 1988).

Not having the alternatives in the model offered by Brown & Levinson (1987) is also criticized (Watts, 2003). He stated that the binary setting of the model does not give possibility of choosing more than one option at the same time.

Despite the criticisms, the politeness theory has been milestone for a lot of studies and able to trigger many other works.

2.6. Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP)

Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, the possibility of the universality politeness has been discussed among researchers.[1] To bring insight into the issue, researchers have conducted cross-cultural studies in various settings. A milestone project was carried out by an international group of researchers (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) which later influenced many researchers to realize requests and apologies. The aim of the project was to compare and contrast the realization patterns of requests and apologies across languages. The researchers put forward a framework with the idea of cross-cultural variability, interlanguage variability and sociopragmatic variability bringing diversity to the realization of speech acts (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984).

The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) has inspired many other studies since it was first carried out. Nearly three decades after its completion, the project can still be defined as one of the most comprehensive empirical studies on cross cultural pragmatics. It was the first project that investigated speech acts of various languages, namely Canadian French, Danish, English (American, Australian and British), German, Hebrew and Russian. The researchers endeavored to discover whether there are any universal patterns and principles in speech acts of requests and apologies. Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs) were used as the instrument, which included eight apology and eight request situations. The situations were created to show all combinations of social distance and dominance variables. Following each item in the test, a brief description of the social distance and status between the interlocutors as well as the settings were explained. The subjects were both native and non-native speakers of the languages under study. An equal number of female and male subjects participated in the study, and the data were analyzed by the native speakers of each language using an analytical framework. The coding framework was based on main elements that are expected to be revealed when realizing the requests and apologies. Within the framework, requests were analyzed in terms of directness,

[1] The ‘universality’ of politeness has also received severe criticisms by various researchers and theoreticians (Matsumoto, 1988, 1989; Ide, 1989, Gu, 1990; Meier, 1995, Wierzbicka, 1993 to name but a few).

perspectives, and both internal and external modifications. The findings showed that cultural and situational factors would affect the choice of request strategies.

The project paved the way for a great number of studies in the field focusing on requests. The researchers examined both native and non-native speakers of various languages.

Weizman (1989) used the CCSARP framework to investigate directness and hints in Hebrew, English (Australian) and French (Canadian) data. The results showed that hints were used less frequently compared to other strategies. In another study done by Weizman (1993), native and non-native speakers of Hebrew were compared to explore the use of hints, which is a request strategy using the CCSARP questionnaire as an instrument. The findings indicated that language learners could use the hints for request realizations.

Similarly, Byon (2004) examined Korean learners' requests. The study explored sociopragmatic features of Korean as a foreign language learner in their requests. The participants were English-speaking university students who were learning Korean and the native speakers of Korean and English. The researcher selected DCT as an instrument and compared data from native and non-native Korean speakers. The data from the native English speakers were used to identify L1 transfer. The results indicated that the requests of learners were usually longer than those of the native speakers and the advanced learners used politeness strategies more. Moreover, the patterns of L1 transfer were observed when compared with the data from the native speakers of English. Some cultural differences were also observed, such as more frequent use of apologies and self-introduction by native speakers of Korean.

Félix-Brasdefer (2005) explored the requests of Mexican Spanish speakers in terms of directness level and politeness in formal and informal situations. The participants were university students whose first language was Mexican Spanish. Open-ended role play was used to collect data, and the findings show that Mexican Spanish speakers prefer to follow more direct request strategies in informal situations. When the distance is higher and the power is lower, the directness level increases.

A number of studies have compared and contrasted the differences of speech act requests between native and non-native speakers of English. The results of the studies by Biesenbach-Lucas (2002) and Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth (2000) indicate that non-native speakers prefer more direct strategies than non-native speakers, and they use significantly fewer syntactic modifications than native speakers.

In the comparison of native and non-native speaker frameworks, perhaps, one of the most popular topics using the framework was the investigation of the relation of politeness and language proficiency. Many researchers working on this examined the request modifications as a request mitigator.

In their study, Faerch & Kasper (1989) investigated the use of internal and external modifiers with native speakers of Danish, German, English and of German and English speaking learners of the Danish language. The findings indicated that external strategies are used more frequently than internal strategies by the learners, which exhibits the need to be clear for the language learners. Moreover, the use of lexical/phrasal downgraders outperformed the use of syntactic downgraders. The researchers claimed that it is easier to process lexical/phrasal downgraders, and the lexical/phrasal downgraders are found to be more transparent for the learners.

A study conducted by House & Kasper (1987) investigated the requests made in a foreign language with German learners of English and Danish learners of English as well as English, German and Danish native speakers. Social distance, dominance, degree of imposition, and the rights and obligations of interlocutors were analyzed within the CCSARP framework. The findings suggested that situational context plays an important role in request realizations. Moreover, learners of a language preferred more direct strategies with more external modifiers; however, they chose to use fewer syntactic downgraders. There was also a difference among the learners of different languages; for instance, German learners were more formal, and their requests more elaborative than Danish learners. It is also stated that learners were aware of the pragmatic constraints since they avoided the specific language features.

Sasaki (1998) compared two pragmatic competence measures, role plays and production questionnaires, with twelve Japanese university students from three different English levels using the CCSARP framework. These two measures elicited

different samples from the students. The responses coming from the role-play data were longer and a greater variety in terms of speech act strategies was observed compared to the production questionnaires. The researcher explained the situation with the interactive situation of the role plays, which is not the case in production questionnaires.

Otcu & Zeyrek (2008) investigated the acquisition of requests of Turkish learners. The study analyzed the effect of language proficiency on request modification using the data from DCT and role-plays. The data were then compared with the strategies of native speakers of English. The participants consisted of Turkish speakers with both high and low English proficiency as well as native English and native Turkish speakers. The results indicated the close relationship between the level of English proficiency and the modification of requests. Whereas lower-level English speakers use more formulaic utterances, learners with higher proficiency are able to use more complex structures; however, this may not always result in pragmatic control over constructions with them.

Another study focusing on the relation between language proficiency and request modifications was performed by Huangfu (2012), who examined the request use of native English and Chinese speakers and also the familiarity and social status effect on the choice of request modifications. The data were collected through the oral discourse completion task (ODCT) with two variables: familiarity and social status. The results showed that Chinese speakers use thanking strategies significantly more than English speakers. Additionally, the findings suggested the effect of familiarity and social status on the use of request modifications.

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2009) compared the requests of Greek speaking English language learners with native English speakers. The researcher used DCT as the research instrument where three situations were presented. The findings suggest that the use of grounders and disarmers as modifiers to mitigate requests was the most used strategy for both groups. Similarly, the use of external modifiers outperforms internal modifiers for both groups. While the native speakers opted to combine internal modifiers more, the learners of English preferred the combinations of internal modifiers more. It is argued that learners of English use external modification more

because it is related to language proficiency and it obtains its politeness from the propositional context and its illocutionary meaning.

Aldhulaee (2011) compared and contrasted the request modifications of Australian English and Iraqi Arabic speakers. The data were collected from role-play interviews in the first language of the speakers. The results showed that both linguistic and cultural factors have an impact on the use of mitigation devices when making a request.

Rasekh & Alijanian (2012) analyzed request modifications from the data collected through closed role plays and a written DCT with university students whose first language is Persian. The results claim that in the oral data, the request perspectives were more impersonal, and the modifications had a softer tone. The researchers also claim that the data ensuing from the role plays provided more natural data than DCT.

Another Persian-focused study conducted by Abdolrezapour & Eslami-Rasekh (2012) compared American and Iranian speakers' use of mitigators and request compliance. The findings show that Persian speakers use more mitigators, more external modifiers in particular, which makes it more certain in terms of compliance. The researchers claim that using mitigation devices is important for Persian speakers probably because of their aim to guarantee compliance. The findings also revealed that American requestors prefer mitigators less frequently, and sometimes they use no modification with conventionally indirect requests. They are also not very concerned about the power of the requestee due to seeing them at the same or similar social level as themselves.

Koosha & Dastjerdi (2012) investigated the requests used in Interchange Series books (I, II, III) by Jack Richard, which are commonly used in second or foreign language teaching centers. The researchers used the taxonomy of Alcón Soler et al. (2005) and selected listening and conversation sections for the study. The findings claim that despite the importance of familiarity with the different forms of making requests, many mitigators were ignored in the book. The numbers of internal and external modifiers are not equal, and some modification devices are used more often than others.

Youssef (2012) compared the request strategies and modifications of Libyan and Malaysian postgraduate students. The results showed that both Libyan and Malaysian

participants used similar external modifiers, but the Malaysian students used internal modifiers less often.

As mentioned in the studies above, one of the popular methods to observe the realization of requests and apologies in different languages and cultures is the Discourse Completion Test (DCT), where the participants are asked to complete the prompted dialogues in an appropriate way.

However, using DCTs as a data collection instrument has been criticized because of the risk of not truly reflecting reality. Answers to a hypothetical situation are not always the same as reactions to a real situation (Nelson et al., 2002). These scenarios are decontextualized and so could be very different from actual discourse (Kasper, 2000; Wolfson, 1986).

In the next section, data collection methods in speech act studies will be discussed.

2.7. Data Collection Methods in Pragmatic Research

It is an undeniable fact that the data collection tool is one of the most critical elements of research. In pragmatic studies, it is also crucial since it should accurately describe authentic language use in real life and be reliable. In pragmatic research, there are a number of data collection methods such as role-plays, interviews and questionnaires.

As expected, the validity of data collection tools for interlanguage pragmatics studies has always been a contentious topic of discussion. The best research instrument for eliciting targeted speech act data, in particular, has been a matter of study for many researchers (Billmyer & Varghese, 2000; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2013; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007a; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992; Kasper, 2000; Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Rose & Ono, 1995; Turnbull, 2010). In this part of the study, two common methods will be explained and examined to give a clearer picture of the data collection procedure employed for this thesis.

The data collection methods in pragmatic studies are classified into nine categories: (1) observational data of authentic discourse; (2) production questionnaires (DCTs); (3) role-plays; (4) elicited conversation; (5) multiple-choice questionnaires; (6) rating scales; (7) interviews; (8) think-aloud protocols; and (9) diaries (Kasper, 2000).

Although all these methods are used in research, three of them are noticeably preferred more frequently, namely naturally occurring data, DCTs and role-plays. The Discourse Completion Test (DCT) that has been used in many studies to elicit the speech acts (Blum-Kulka, 1982; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; Márquez Reiter, 2000; Ogiermann, 2009a; Ogiermann, 2009b) can be defined as a written questionnaire that has brief descriptions of specific situations with the aim of exposing the use of speech acts being explored. The DCT was initially developed for speech act research by Blum-Kulka (1982) in order to collect a large number of controlled data in a short period of time.

In order to use the DCT as an instrument, the DCT is prepared in a questionnaire format and distributed to the participants. The participants are asked to read the short situational descriptions and the dialogue followed by completing the blanks with their responses where they are expected to use speech acts. The participants' role, the context, the social distance, and the social power between the interlocutors are usually explained in the description part to see the effect of social variables on the choice of strategies, and of course, to make the usage as natural as possible. In the studies where the dialogue is expected to be held between the college students and their professors, the scenarios are usually selected from the situations they encounter in daily life, such as submitting an assignment or asking for an extension beyond the due date. The goal is to create real-life situations so that the participants can produce utterances with a speech act that they would naturally do in a conversation. When the researchers conduct their studies in culturally varied environments, they need to make changes in the situations to adapt to the culture. Along with the translations, the names need to be changed to make them more naturalistic.

DCTs are based on the presumption that DCTs can elicit the use of spoken language in a written mode (Sasaki, 1998), and they can reflect the natural speech content accurately (Beebe & Cummings, 2009). They are usually preferred as an instrument in pragmatic research because of the belief that it is difficult to collect data through natural conversation observations in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural studies (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). On the other hand, many researchers advocate the naturally occurring data since "there is no doubt that language use is best studied by analyzing actual speech" (Ogiermann, 2018, p. 18).

Needless to say, the ideal manner of collecting data would be to collect *naturally occurring* data to assure the internal validity as naturalistic data present language use as it is. Thus, some scholars have argued from early on that the data should be authentic and ought to be taken from actual speech situations to observe language use and patterns in a conversation (Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Wolfson, 1986). In order to collect authentic data from naturally occurring speech, methods such as audio or video recordings have been used. These methods help to capture prosodic and paralinguistic characteristics, such as facial expressions or intonation, which is impossible to obtain from DCTs (Kasper & Rose, 2001).

Some other scholars, on the other hand, claim that the time that needs to be spent on the data collection procedure is the greatest drawback of using this method in speech act studies. Depending on the frame of the study, the researchers may need to record conversations for a long time to acquire the targeted speech act use (Ogiermann, 2009). Furthermore, some researchers mention the difficulty of having to transcribe all speech that might last hours (Kasper & Dahl, 1991).

In addition to what some have referred to as the impracticality of this type of data collection, the contextual variables are beyond the control of the researcher; therefore, there is a potential risk of unsystematic and inadequate data (Al-Shboul et al., 2012; Ogiermann, 2009). Moreover, the researcher needs to carry out the data collection process in person and in most cases be physically together with any study subjects, which also makes conducting a cross-cultural study difficult (Nelson et al., 2002).

Along with the arguments mentioned above, some researchers compared the results of DCTs and naturally occurring data in different contexts (Chen et al., 2015; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2013; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007a; Kasper, 2000; Rintell & Mitchell, 1989; Tran, 2004).

Significant differences have been found between data collected using the DCT and data collected using other methods in several studies. Golato (2003) compared compliment responses with the naturally occurring data and the data collected through DCT. She discovered significant variations, including the fact that DCT respondents never overlooked compliments whilst participants in real-life interactions may realize compliments less frequently.

In Félix-Brasdefer's (2003) study, native and non-native English and Spanish speakers' politeness strategies were examined with the data obtained through DCT and open role-playing when refusing an invitation at three levels of social status, which are equal, higher unequal and lower unequal. The results show that the DCT shared only a small percentage of the refusal strategies observed in data collected through the role-play data. More mitigators and elaboration were observed in the role-play data, as well as a wider variety of indirect strategies found in authentic speech.

In another study he did where explored the requests with regard to directness level and the content in role-plays and naturalistic data, Félix-Brasdefer indicated that natural data provided the most reliable way of studying chosen aspects of naturally-occurring speech acts in social interactions (Félix-Brasdefer, 2007a).

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2013) also investigated requests by comparing natural data with DCT data in terms of degree of directness, lexical and syntactic modifiers, and request perspective and found that request strategies in naturalistic data are more direct than the DCT data. It is highlighted that in terms of directness level and lexical modification, they followed identical patterns. As a result, it was argued that DCT requests might approximate naturalistic data to some degree and that DCT data is thus not without its validation. She also noted that DCT should be used in conjunction with other methods to ensure the validation of the simulated data.

Despite all the disadvantages, gathering data through natural speech is undoubtedly considered a true and accurate reflection of people's real-life speech act performances. Authentic speech offers rich contextual settings and it is helpful to see the real picture. Observing natural speech may also be helpful when working with small children or with participants unable to write.

DCTs are helpful in providing insights, but the naturalistic data present how the participants act in real life without having a limitation. The major shortcomings of collecting authentic data affect the data collection process slightly in the email context compared to verbal contexts since the authentic format is written. For this study, the most significant matter considered as a drawback of using authentic data was the volume of the data as it is known that DCTs allow the researcher to collect a large sample of speech act data on the intended linguistic use.

2.8. Email Discourse

Emails have been an essential part of our lives since the Internet became globally widespread. It is not easy to define the linguistic identity of emails because although it has a fixed discourse structure, using the most appropriate or effective language to achieve the purpose of the email could be more complex than anticipated (Crystal, 2008).

There is no doubt that emails have become a necessity for many adults in the modern world. Nevertheless, the topic of how to write an email appropriately is an issue that needs to be discussed because language learners usually find themselves in situations where pragmatic failures could have a considerable impact on personal interactions (Gonzalez-Lloret, 2019). Owing to those facts, developing pragmatic competence becomes crucial for email users (Herraiz-Martínez & Sánchez-Hernández, 2018). The need to learn to write emails not only accurate grammatically but also pragmatically has become a global need (Herraiz-Martínez & Sánchez-Hernández, 2018). It is not separate from the conversation process; in fact, it shapes that process (Gonzalez-Lloret, 2019) and all interaction that follows.

This need becomes increasingly critical for adults, especially if they endeavor to make a living because email has already become the primary medium of contact in both academic and professional settings. Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) states that "email has become a viable alternative means of communication, providing the convenience of obtaining clarification, feedback, and permission almost instantly when students need it" (p. 61). For professional life, email is also widespread. In fact, it was found to be the dominant mode of occupational communication in the research conducted on 1,066 adult employees by the Pew Research Center (2014). The use of email at work has significantly increased after the pandemic since distance work has become a part of everyday life (Nguyen et al., 2020).

When the importance and the increased use of email are taken into consideration, it is necessary to understand the various factors that might have an effect on the choices of the learners in email requests as well as the influence of those decisions on appropriateness (Winans, 2020).

Ideally, in an appropriate email, there are particular sections that are required regardless of the formality, content or context. Each email is expected to have a short subject, an appropriate salutation and a closure with acceptable use of language. Adult learners need to know how to write appropriate emails because "the ability to write polite, status congruent academic emails is increasingly important" (Shim, 2013, p. 112).

Despite the convenience of communicating asynchronously and the opportunity to edit prior to sending, it is not without its challenges. Even though it contains oral features, it lacks paralinguistic and non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions or gestures. Additionally, formal emails, particularly, are expected to follow a strict format with a marked opening, a body and a closing. However, as the use of smartphones is increasing, the tone of formal emails is found to be changing in student-faculty email interactions with teenagers and young adults (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007).

2.9. Email Requests in Student-Faculty Interaction

Due to its increased use in academic settings, email has been at the center of research for the last two decades as it has become the most widespread communication tool (Bafoutsou & Mentzas, 2001). Furthermore, in addition to being a communication tool, in the education setting, email serves a variety of purposes such as making announcements, enabling assignment submissions or distributing materials (Haworth, 1999; Worrells, 2002). Because of this diverse role it has been taking on, student-faculty communication has been studied by many scholars. The features of email language (Baron, 2002; Baron, 1998, 2004; Crystal, 2008; Herring, 1996) and the discursive structures of emails have been investigated (Ho, 2009; Nickerson, 2000; Virtanen & Maricic, 2000) in-depth.

The pragmatic aspect of email communication between the student and faculty has also been a popular topic (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2002, 2006, 2007; Duthler, 2006; Ho, 2010, 2011a, 2011b). Other researchers have investigated communication strategies and the topics of student emails (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005; Collins, 1998; Malley, 2006; Martin et al., 1999b).

Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig (1996) were among the first to study students' requestive emails to the faculty. They looked at 34 native and a mixed group of 65 non-native speakers' email requests of graduate students and discussed how the faculty evaluated them. The emails were analyzed to determine whether they had a positive or negative impact on their professors, the receivers of the emails. The research showed that non-native speakers use more direct strategies such as '*I want...,*' or '*Please do....*'

Bloch (2002) studied the email interaction of L2 learners with their teachers. He analyzed 120 emails sent to the teacher for the course and divided them into four categories: (1) phatic communion; (2) calling for assistance; (3) making excuses; and (4) making requests. The findings revealed that participants employed various communication strategies in their emails. Emails seem to be an effective way for the students to communicate with their teacher. It was concluded that writing an email requires more than only understanding the language; it often necessitates the use of proper forms at the proper time. Therefore, he emphasized the necessity of adding emails to the curriculum. It was concluded that the email messages highlight how important it is for many students to have a positive social interaction with their teacher.

Biesenbach-Lucas (2005) studied email conversations between faculty and students and found that L2 learners were less effective in email interactions on topics such as requesting an answer from a professor and responding to them. According to the author, many NNSs are not exposed to email use in their own cultures, so what they use in the target language could be appropriate in their own cultures. The findings show significant quantitative and qualitative distinctions in the topics and strategies of American and international students. That is, American students show higher initiative and capacity to adjust to remote communication in email partners.

In another study, Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) investigated how low and high imposition requests were made by native and non-native speakers of English to the faculty. She used the CCSARP framework to examine the level of directness, politeness strategies, request perspectives and request realization patterns. Compared to previous speech act research, it was found that the learners preferred far more direct strategies and hints. Moreover, the native speakers exhibited a stronger capacity to generate polite email messages to their professors than did the non-native speakers.

Also, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008) investigated the differences among Greek students' requests in terms of internal and external modification dimensions. She looked at the extent to which English learners of Greek speakers' usage of mitigating devices differ from native British English speakers and the relation of these differences to the culture and to politeness. The impact of social variables such as familiarity, power, and imposition of the requested act on the learners' usage of request mitigators was also explored. The results show that Greek learners used different types of modifiers in different amounts more so than the native speakers. It is asserted that these differences can be explained by pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic transfer as well as by their politeness orientation; whereas the politeness orientation of Greek culture is more positive, the tendency in British culture is negative.

Pan (2010) studied speech act realizations of requests in the faculty-student emails in her doctoral dissertation. The data were collected through DCTs, stimulated recalls, and audience judgments from ten native English learners, ten Hong Kong Chinese learners of English and ten Mainland Chinese learners of English. Students from all three groups appeared to be indirect when delivering status-unequal requests to the teachers. While both groups of learners depended mainly on the query preparatory, which is a conventionally indirect strategy, native speakers of English were more flexible in their strategy choices: they used a variety of strategies from very direct to indirect.

Hendriks (2010) looked at how syntactic and lexical modifiers affected the way Dutch learners wrote English requests in their email messages. Native English speakers were asked to rate the understandability of the requests in the email messages as well as the personality dimensions of the sender of the email. The results showed that the underuse of request modifiers in emails negatively impacted the participants' view of the sender's personality.

Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010) investigated the requests made by graduate and postgraduate students to faculty. The data were collected from 89 Greek speaking English language learners and 87 native English speakers through a written DCT. Both internal and external modification in addition to the request perspectives were analyzed, and significant differences were found. The results show that learners

have a higher incidence of using zero marking as they modify their requests in an effort to be polite and have a lower incidence of lexical politeness markers compared to native speakers. Moreover, native speakers were observed to use the impersonal request perspective significantly more frequently than the learners.

Félix-Brasdefer (2012) investigated the email requests of L1 English and L2 Spanish university students. The research focused on the interpretation of request head actions and lexical and syntactic modifiers used to formulate direct or indirect requests in four different contexts ranging from low to high imposition, including requests for information, validation, feedback and action. 120 L2 Spanish and 120 L1 English language email messages of Spanish language learners were analyzed. The request forms were examined with regard to imposition level, internal modification and politeness. The findings suggest that the imposition degree of the request and preferred language shape the choice for request strategies. The research revealed that the choice of language also has an impact on the imposition level. In particular, for L2 Spanish, students made more requests for action to change the professor's behavior, while in L1 English, the request of action was observed less frequently. The students used 11 separate head acts, but direct questions and conventionally indirect requests were the most frequent strategies for both groups, and the learners would use more want statements.

Zhu (2012b) explored the pragmatic competence of English learners of Chinese speakers. The study compared of request strategies in emails between two groups of university students: English majors and non-English majors to examine whether the power, social distance and imposition levels have a significant impact on the selection of request strategies.

Additionally, in Shim's (2013) study where native English speakers working as a professor at Korean universities were asked to rate request emails from non-native English learners, it was found that 71% of emails were found to be impolite or inappropriate. Moreover, 73% of requests in the emails had direct strategies without mitigation. These direct strategies had left a negative impression on the professors (Shim, 2013).

Different from the aforementioned studies, Chen (2015) looked at the cognitive process in the construction of emails. She looked at the L2 learners' cognitive processes when sending a request email to the professors. Fifteen pairs of Chinese-speaking English learners provided concurrent and retrospective verbal documents that were evaluated with regard to aim, cognition, preparation and evaluation. The findings show that the learners used different politeness techniques to articulate their requestive intentions while answering an email and they concentrated on lexical, grammatical, and situational features. Furthermore, the students organized their emails in accordance with a greeting, message, and closing parts. They assessed their success with the politeness degree and persuasiveness of their explanations.

In a recent study, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2018) examined the relationship between the level of directness and the address forms in L2 students' emails to the faculty. She used 200 naturalistic emails written by native Greek speaking English language learners to their professors. The findings highlighted the general preference of L2 learners for the formal address forms and more direct request forms. The learners were found to use formal types of address for bald-on-the-record request techniques, and there was a correlation between the address forms and the level of directness. These correlation findings were interpreted to mean that learners' pragmatic choices may fail to find a balance between pragmatic clarification and politeness.

As mentioned previously, there are a number of studies that investigate the email requests of language learners, but most of these have focused on one group of language speakers. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there have not been any studies focusing on the request emails of *adult learners* apart from *college students*. The study at hand is novel in this regard.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Presentation

This chapter aims to provide information about the methodology that was selected for the study. After providing the research questions that guided the thesis, the design of the research and the participants of the study are presented. Then, the data collection method and data analysis procedures are explained.

3.2. Research Design

3.2.1. Data Sources

The study uses naturalistic data which include the emails from the students to the teacher about questions or requests related to the class.

3.2.2. Participants and Setting

The data of the study were collected through the emails of 115 students attending Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School in the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years. The total number of emails is 145 that were sent by 115 participants. Below are the summary tables for demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 3 Major Demographics

	Variable Range	n	%
Age	20-30 years old	33	29%
	31-40 years old	37	32%
	41-60 years old	39	34%
	61 +	6	5%
Gender	F	77	67%
	M	38	33%
Education	8th grade or less	16	14%
	Some HS	19	17%
	HS diploma	34	30%
	Some college	22	19%
	BA degree	24	21%
Years in US	1-5 years	59	51%
	6-10 years	29	25%
	10+ years	27	23%
	Total:	115	

The first languages of the participants are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 First Languages

L1	n	%
Spanish	70	61%
French	13	11%
Amharic	12	10%
Portuguese	5	4%
Tigrinya	4	3%
Russian	3	3%
Chinese	2	2%
Swahili	2	2%
Tamil	1	1%
Bengali	1	1%
Oromo	1	1%
Vietnamese	1	1%
Total	115	

As for the countries, country of birth of the participants is presented in the table below.

Table 5 Participants' Countries of Birth

Country of Birth	n	%	(cont'd)	n	%
El Salvador	33	29%	Senegal	2	2%
Ethiopia	13	11%	Tanzania	2	2%
Honduras	9	8%	Venezuela	2	2%
Cameroon	8	7%	Bangladesh	1	1%
Guatemala	7	6%	Bolivia	1	1%
Mexico	6	5%	Dominican Republic	1	1%
Brazil	5	4%	Haiti	1	1%
Colombia	5	4%	Ivory Coast	1	1%
Eritrea	4	3%	Nicaragua	1	1%
Peru	3	3%	Russia	1	1%
Belarus	2	2%	Sri Lanka	1	1%
China	2	2%	Togo	1	1%
Ecuador	2	2%	Vietnam	1	1%
			Total	115	

The participants come from different backgrounds and speak various L1s. In spite of being such a heterogeneous group, every participant is an adult learner who migrated to the USA from their home countries with the intention of making the USA a new home and have been living in Washington DC for some time. Living in Washington DC is a registration requirement of the school. Although the students' legal status is not questioned, they need to prove that they are Washington DC residents in order to enroll.

Although their academic backgrounds may differ, they all have the same English proficiency level and take the Level 5 English class at Carlos Rosario School. Level 5 class is equivalent to the intermediate level (B1). The reason for choosing to collect data from Level 5 students' emails is two-fold. First, Level 5 is the highest language level offered at Harvard Campus of Carlos Rosario School, so the students' language level is sufficient to make requests. Second, as the language level increases, the digital literacy level advances, as well. Since the opposite is also true, the researcher intends to avoid possible obstacles that students might have. Because of the data collection tool employed for the study, homogeneity was not possible to be established regarding

age; nevertheless, it was a homogenous group with regard to their English language proficiency.

To be placed in a Level 5 class, the students either took the placement test after the registration if they were registered the school for the first time, or they took the final test when they had completed Level 4 and earned the right to be promoted to Level 5. Some of the students may have remained at Level 5, but since they were not able to pass the final test for Level 5, their language level was considered similar to the other students, and hence, their emails were not eliminated from the data.

The students attend the 3-hour English classes four or five days per week. The school offers morning, afternoon or evening classes depending on the availability of the students. Since all of the learners are adults, they all have additional responsibilities in life such as work and family care, so they have the opportunity to enroll in the time slot that fits their schedule. Whereas the morning and afternoon classes are five days of the week, evening classes are conducted from Monday to Thursday. After the pandemic, distance classes were offered as 1.5 hours synchronously and 1.5 hours asynchronously for four days per week for both shifts. The students in the morning and afternoon classes also have an additional complete asynchronous learning day on Wednesdays. CALL classes began to be offered as a 1-hour, once a week optional class. The participants of this study were selected from the morning and evening classes.

3.2.3. Data Collection

The data collection method is a significant step in the research as it is a primary tool to find answers to the research questions and needs to be selected depending on the research questions and the objectives of the research (Yuan, 2001).

The data were collected through the email messages sent to the researcher in her capacity as a CALL Lab instructor and through the email messages sent to the English teachers. The students would send emails to the instructors for different reasons, but since email requests are the main focus of the study, these emails were identified and compiled by the researcher.

3.2.3.1. Emails

Emails are chosen as the naturalistic data for the study for several reasons. First of all, emails have become one of the most common communication tools and have been used widely in various settings in both formal and informal situations such as professional correspondence at work, communication with friends or classmates, and even governmental or institutional communication. It is also not uncommon that strangers prefer to use email as a communication tool (Franch & Lorenzo-Dus, 2008). Additionally, it is known that emails now are one of the most significant parts of written discourse production, which provides research with a significant resource (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005). Moreover, emails serve a pragmatic function for apologizing, asking for a suggestion, requesting information or thanking someone (Al-ali et al., 2008) which are also by their very nature, speech acts.

Using appropriate language in emails is now crucial since there is a significant difference in terms of language in formal and informal emails. As Baron (2002) suggests, emails demonstrate the language use of people depending on the relationship of the interlocutors, and both format and style change according to social dynamics. Therefore, using the appropriate etiquette gains importance for adults who need to have formal written communications.

3.2.3.2. Data Set Compiled for the Study

The data collected for the study are naturally occurring email messages from the students to the CALL and ESL teachers. The emails were sent to four different teachers. Except for the researcher, whose first language is Turkish, the other three teachers' first language is English. As was mentioned before, collecting the data in a naturalistic setting was preferred because collecting such data enables researchers to find patterns of actual speech act use and understand how speech acts are realized (Golato, 2003). Although collecting naturalistic data is criticized due to factors of randomness, unpredictably and infrequency, which hinders collecting data from larger samples and having to generalize the results (Wolfson, 1986), and the impossibility of setting up situations that will allow some language usages to recur, the disadvantages of collecting naturalistic data can be easily eliminated (Gass et al., 2005). Another drawback claimed is not to be able to have control over variables such as context or

social distance since the researcher does not intervene in the natural interactions (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Cohen, 1996; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007a; Kasper, 1996). However, if the researcher conducts a deep analysis of the data to observe the possible effects of the variable on the language production of the interlocutors, this problem can also be overcome (Wolfson, 1986).

The main instrument of the data is the students' emails, which are sent to teachers for different reasons, such as asking for homework or extra practice, informing about non-attendance in class on a particular day or expressing gratitude. The emails selected for the study are request emails due to their being the most frequent in student-teacher correspondence. The topics of all the emails in the data are school-related. To ensure privacy, the personal data of the students and the teachers (which could override the anonymity aimed for) are not presented in the study. Also, as stated in the chapter 3.3, the approvals from the school administration and the ethics committee were obtained and both the teachers and the participants were asked if they would like to participate.

3.2.3.3. Data Collection Procedure

The emails were obtained from Level 5 learners, who practice the digital literacy component of their curriculum every ten days or two weeks (depending on their shift) in the class. They use laptops with their CALL teacher to learn topics such as navigating a website, identity theft, using keywords for Internet searches, and using a spreadsheet to create charts and interpreting them.

The main communication tool between the students and the CALL teacher is email. Students are encouraged to send an email to the teacher if/when they have a question or a request. Communication via emails is mostly preferred by the students for three reasons. Firstly, the CALL teacher is usually mobile in the building, and the students may not find her in her classroom all the time. Secondly, the teacher does not share her personal phone number or any other personal means of communication, such as social media apps or websites, with the students. Lastly and most importantly, it is an excellent opportunity for the learners to use their digital literacy and writing skills for real life purpose.

The data for the study were gathered from the request emails sent to the teachers by the students. The requests that the students made include asking for homework or an assignment or asking for links to online classes. These are common student-teacher email communication topics, which is the main reason for being selected for the study. Moreover, as previous research has shown, requests were found to be challenging for language learners (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). The data were collected over two different time periods.

The first data collection process started at the beginning of the spring term of the 2019-2020 academic year. It was planned to be completed in that term; however, the researcher had to halt the process when the COVID 19 pandemic occurred, after which time the school decided to continue virtually, and immediately after the transition to distance learning, the email system of the school experienced a malware attack, which caused the collapse of the entire email system. Unfortunately, the old emails could not be recovered and the IT department of the school was required to set up a completely new email system. During this process, no email communication could occur, so the teachers would use other means to communicate with the students.

Because not enough data were collected during the first weeks of school, the researcher continued collecting data in the fall term of the 2020-2021 academic year. In the first data collection period, occurring while students were attending their face-to-face classes, the researcher took the following steps. First, at the beginning of the first term, the teacher shared her work email address with the students and informed the students that they could send an email to the teacher whenever they wanted to communicate for any reason. The teacher also shared the email address with the student in the booklet that was given to them on their first day of class. During the first four weeks, the teacher encouraged the use of technology more as required by the objectives of the lesson. However, sending an email is not a class requirement or an assignment, and students have other options to communicate with the teacher such as talking to the teacher in person or asking an assignment the ESL teacher or a classmate.

During the second period of the data collection process, the researcher collected the emails that the students sent to her and also contacted the other ESL teachers and requested them to forward their emails from the students. Because another

communication platform, which is a type of text messaging tool[2], had already been established, the number of emails the teachers were receiving was lower than usual.

After the end of the whole data collection process, the researcher manually identified the request emails that the students had sent. Due to being naturally occurring emails, the content of the emails varied from requests to apologies or giving information; therefore, the emails that did not include requests were omitted from the data. After the elimination of the non-requestive email messages, 145 emails were included in the final data set to be analyzed.

3.2.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis is defined as a systemic search for meaning (Hatch, 2002) with data being first organized into categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). With that in mind, first, the data were first organized under two categories: the request head act and the email components. Then, the coding frameworks for both parts were determined and shared with another coder. The data were analyzed following the CCSARP framework (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984) and adaptations of CCSARP by three other scholars (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Zhu, 2012a). Later, the coding process started.

In order to ensure inter-coder reliability, 35% of the data were coded by another coder who held a Ph.D. in the field of ELT. When a discrepancy arose, the coder and the researcher worked together, discussed and came to an agreement with the coding. In total, the intercoder reliability between the coder and the researcher was 95%.

The compiled corpus of email messages was analyzed by coding. After data collection, the emails were coded and analyzed using the MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2020 software package. The analysis was divided into two main parts. The first part would deal with the parts of the email, which are the opening, closing and subject lines of the emails. The second part pertained to the request head acts, which were analyzed with regard to internal and external modifications, level of directness, request perspectives and forms of address.

[2] Because the app of aforementioned messaging system provides the translation service, the data were not preferred to be collected through it.

The emails components were first identified as (a) the subject line, (b) openings (greetings and the address word), (c) the request head act, (d) the level of directness of the request, and (e) closings (expression of gratitude or valediction). Then, the sub-coding was applied to each part of the analysis within the theoretical framework selected for the study.

For the email components of the analysis, the modified coding framework developed by Zhu (2012a), which was based on the frameworks of Bhatia (1993), Blum-Kulka (1984) and Swales (1990), was used.

The request head acts were coded within the CCSARP framework adapted and modified by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) and (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007), which was first proposed by (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). The request head acts were analyzed regarding internal and external modifications, directness level, request perspective and forms of address.

3.2.4.1. Email Components

Herring (1996) states that three parts, which are an opening, a body and a closing, are found in emails. In addition to this classification, the subject is defined as an email component that needs to be succinct. The email messages were coded within the coding framework, which are the subject line, openings, body (supportive moves and head acts) and closings. The main components of the opening part consist of a greeting or an address word or both, and the closing part consists of the gratitude statements or signature or both.

The subject line involves the subject part of the email, which is to draw the attention of the reader or provide brief information about the content of the email. It can enable the reader a more meaningful scanning of the inbox (Shapiro et al., 1985). Writing a proper subject is vital in a formal email and students need to be taught how to write them since the lack of correct form or content may convey an informal message (Shapiro et al., 1985).

Openings may consist of salutations and greetings to the receiver. These is mostly selected depending on the formality between the sender and the receiver. A message can start with a salutation such as '*Dear …*' or greeting such as '*Good morning'* or it

can start with both. In order not to violate the formality rules, the sender needs to select an appropriate opening.

Closings are the end of the message. The purpose of a closing is to impart a pleasant closure to the message (Zhu, 2012a). Closings can express gratitude such as '*Thank you*', expectation to be in further contact, such as '*Looking forward to hearing from you*' or they can include a formulaic expression such as '*Regards*' and the signature of the sender.

In a complete email, all these three parts are expected along with the message. Even though there are no official rules, it has the standard of general etiquette (Gupta, 2012). They may not be considered "perfect," but it is important to follow some general rules to convey the message correctly. Obviously, this gains extra importance for second language learners. Therefore, the study also explored the use of openings, closings and the subject line in the data.

3.2.4.2. Request Head Acts

The head act of a request is defined as the core of the speech act (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). This helps the receiver understand the illocutionary force conveyed in the email message. It forms the tone of the email and may be preceded or followed by an internal modifier, an external modifier or both.

The analysis of the request head acts was made under five main categories: (a) level of directness; (b) internal modification; (c) external modification; (d) request perspective; and (e) forms of address.

The level of directness of the request head acts was first carried out to observe the overall directness of the requests as identified in the modified version of CCSARP by Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011). Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) identified three categories under directness which are direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect (hints). Following the adaptation of Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011), a fourth option was added to directness, namely opting out of the act altogether ('don't do the face-threatening act (FTA)') for emails that had no or minimal text (such as a greeting only) sent to receive the assignment or feedback.

Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) distinguished non-conventionally indirect requests as mild and strong hints. However, this study instead followed the suggestion offered by Félix-Brasdefer (2012), which takes hints as "an utterance containing partial reference to the object needed for carrying out the act" (p. 98). In other words, a hint or a non-conventionally indirect strategy is how the sender indirectly implies their intention to have the receiver make the request.

Table 6 Degree of Directness – Coding Categories for E-requests

CCSARP Directness Levels	Request Strategies	Examples
Direct	Imperatives/mood derivable	- Please note what changes should be made.
	Elliptical requests	- Any comments?
	Performatives	- I have to ask for an extension for a week.
	Want statements	- I would like your suggestion - I want to have an extension
	Need statements	- I will need a little more time
	Expectation statements	- I hope you'll give me the weekend to finish my assignment - I look forward to hearing from you.
Conventionally indirect	Query preparatory (ability, willingness, permission)	- Can/could. . . /Would you mind. . . - I would appreciate it if. . .
Non-conventionally indirect (Hints)	Strong hints/mild hints	- Attached is a draft of my work. - I have some trouble understanding the essay question.

Note. Reprinted from ""Please answer me as soon as possible": Pragmatic failure in non-native speakers' e-mail requests to faculty" by M. Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, *Journal of Pragmatics, 43*(13), 3210. Copyright 2011 by Elsevier B.V.

The study also examined the internal and external modification of the request head acts. The internal modification elements can be defined as additional elements within the request head act that are not essential for the utterance to be understood as a request (Blum-Kulka, 1989).

Table 7 Internal Modification: Syntactic and Lexical Modifiers

Syntactic modifiers	past tense progressive aspect embedding
Lexical modifiers	please downtoners: possibly, maybe, perhaps understaters: just, a little, a minute subjectivizers: I was wondering, I think/feel, I wanted to know consultative devices: do you think, is there a chance hedges: some, any, somehow

Note. Reprinted from "Students writing emails to faculty: An examination of E-politeness among native and non-native speakers of English" by S. Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007, *Language Learning & Technology, 11*(2), 67. Copyright 2007, ISSN 1094-3501.

External modification, in contrast, is in the context in which the request head act is embedded and affects the illocutionary force indirectly (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). It primarily functions to emphasize or soften the request. The classification used for the study followed the modification of the CCSARP project by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011), who adapted the classification based on the work of several scholars (Blum-Kulka, 1985; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Schauer, 2007; Trosborg, 1995; Van Mulken, 1996; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010).

Table 8 External Modification: The Classification Scheme – Supportive Moves

Name	Explanation	Example
Greeting/opening	The writer opens the email with a greeting.	- Hi/Hello/Good morning - How are you? - I am sorry to hear that you are not well.
Self-introduction	The writer introduces himself/herself.	I'm Maria K. from your LALI-141 class
Grounder	A clause that can either precede or follow a request and allows the speaker to give reasons, explanations, or justifications for his or her request	'I would like an assignment extension because I could not deal the typing time.'

Table 8 (cont'd)

Disarmer	A phrase with which "the speaker tries to remove any potential objections the hearer might raise upon being confronted with the request" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989:287).	'I know that this assignment is important but could you…?' 'I hope you understand my situation…'
Preparator	The speaker prepares the hearer for the ensuing request.	'I really need a favor…'
Getting a pre-commitment	The speaker checks on a potential refusal before performing the request by attempting to have the hearer commit.	'Could you do me a favor?'.
Promise	The speaker makes a promise to be fulfilled upon completion of the requested act.	'Could you give me an extension? I promise I'll have it ready by tomorrow.'.
Imposition minimizer	"The speaker tries to reduce the imposition placed on the hearer by his request" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989:288).	'I would like to ask for an extension. Just for a few days.'
Apology	The speaker apologizes for posing the request and/or for the imposition incurred.	'I'm very sorry but I need an extension on this project.'
Orientation move	The opening discourse moves, which serves as an orientation function but does not necessarily mitigate or aggravate the request in any way.	'You know the seminar paper I'm supposed to be giving on the 29th …' 'It about our midterm exam' 'I have a question about the essay…'
Complement/sweetener	"Employed to flatter the interlocutor and to put them into a positive mood" (Schauer, 2009:92)	'Your opinion counts' 'I hope you feel better'
Pre-closings/thanks		'Thanks for your time' 'I look forward to hearing from you'
E-mail closing		Best, Sincerely,

Note. Reprinted from " "Please answer me as soon as possible": Pragmatic failure in non-native speakers' e-mail requests to faculty" by M. Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, *Journal of Pragmatics, 43*(13), 3211-3212. Copyright 2011 by Elsevier B.V

In addition to the level of directness, internal and external modification of requests, request perspective, which explains the requests from the hearer or speaker's perspective, was examined. Request perspectives indicate the person who has to perform the action of the request mentioned in the email message. Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) proposed four possible perspectives that are listed below from the least polite to the most polite.

(1) you (hearer) perspective: *Could you send me…?*

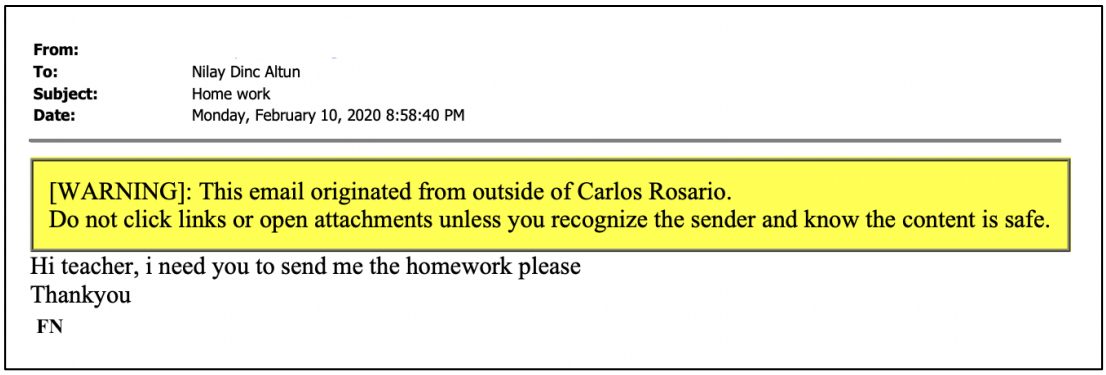
(2) we (speaker/hearer) perspective: *Can we meet to….?*

(3) I (speaker) perspective: *I was wondering if I could…?*

(4) Impersonal perspective: *Is it possible to…?*

Finally, the study examined the forms of address used by the learners towards the teacher. The address words were examined following the coding framework of Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) with regard to the presence or absence of the deference word '*dear*,' greetings in the title, any incorrect use of titles, any unacceptable constructions, zero forms of address, and formal and less formal constructions. The use of the address words might show formality and informality, and they might also cause offense or increase directness (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011).

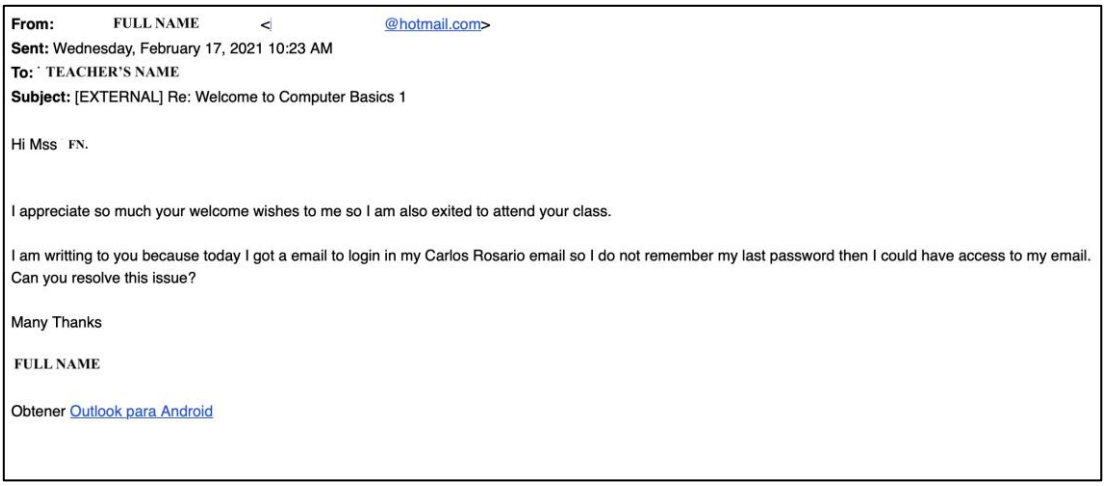
Examples from actual data samples before coding are provided below:


From:
To: Nilay Dinc Altun
Subject: Home work
Date: Monday, February 10, 2020 8:58:40 PM

[WARNING]: This email originated from outside of Carlos Rosario.
Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi teacher, i need you to send me the homework please
Thankyou
FN

Figure 2: The screenshot of the email in the title of the thesis



From: FULL NAME <@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 17, 2021 10:23 AM
To: TEACHER'S NAME
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Welcome to Computer Basics 1

Hi Mss FN.

I appreciate so much your welcome wishes to me so I am also exited to attend your class.

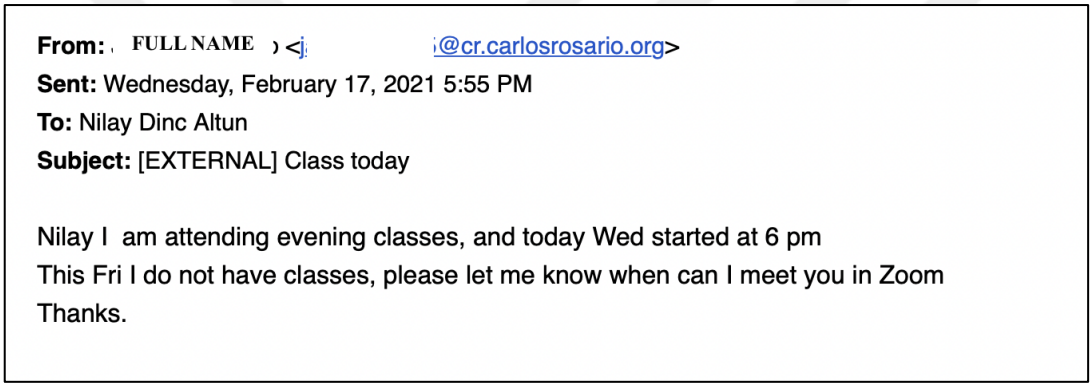
I am writting to you because today I got a email to login in my Carlos Rosario email so I do not remember my last password then I could have access to my email. Can you resolve this issue?

Many Thanks

FULL NAME

Obtener Outlook para Android

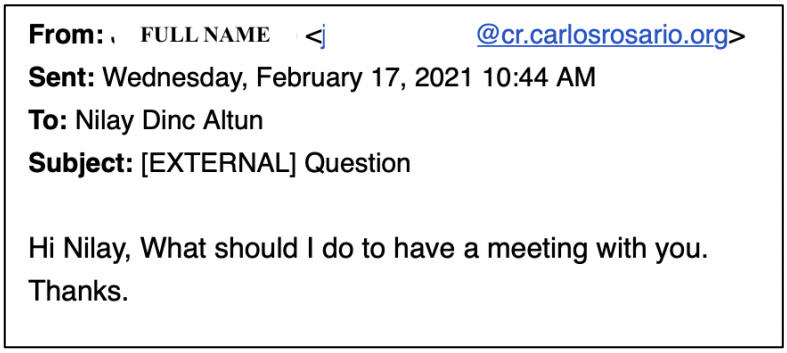
Figure 3: A sample screenshot from the data



From: FULL NAME <@cr.carlosrosario.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 17, 2021 5:55 PM
To: Nilay Dinc Altun
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Class today

Nilay I am attending evening classes, and today Wed started at 6 pm
This Fri I do not have classes, please let me know when can I meet you in Zoom
Thanks.

Figure 4: A sample screenshot from the data



From: FULL NAME <@cr.carlosrosario.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 17, 2021 10:44 AM
To: Nilay Dinc Altun
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Question

Hi Nilay, What should I do to have a meeting with you.
Thanks.

Figure 5: A sample screenshot from the data

3.3. Ethical Consideration

To address the ethical issues related to the study, the researcher informed the students with an email asking them to use their email messages for the study. For those who

did not choose to take part in the study, that email provided an opportunity to choose to opt out of the study. The email also informed and ensured the anonymity of the students saying that no personal information would be revealed. Personal, sensitive or confidential information was not included in the study.

Moreover, prior to the data collection procedure, the school administration and the teachers were informed about the study with details in order to request approval. Additionally, METU Human Subjects Ethics Committee approval was also obtained (Protocol number: 384-ODTU-2020; see Appendix A). After having been granted all approvals, the data collection period commenced.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Presentation

In this section, the findings of the study will be given. The chapter will address the results in relation to the literature and discuss the implications of the study.

4.2. Results on Request Head Acts

The head act is the part of speech which conveys the key illocutionary force of the utterance. The head act is the center of the request and it can be modified internally, externally or both internally and externally (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The level of directness of the request is also determined by the head act. As has been outlined in the methodology chapter, the modified CCSARP framework was adopted in line with the directness level in order to define the strategies of the request head acts in the data set.

4.2.1. Level of Directness

The use of the levels of directness, which are direct request strategies, conventionally indirect request strategies, and non-conventionally indirect request strategies, as well as the opting-out-of-the-act option, were examined with the micro-strategies within these key categories. In this part of the chapter, the results for the use of directness level and their micro-strategies will be presented in charts. The findings will be discussed at each degree of directness, with discussions focusing on the most notable aspects of the results.

The findings of the directness level employed by the students in their email messages are shown below.

Table 9 Degree of Requestive Directness

Direct				Total: 53/145 (37%)
	Imperatives/mood derivable	25/145	(17%)	
	Expectation Statements	1/145	(1%)	
	Performatives	8/145	(6%)	
	Direct Questions	2/145	(1%)	
	Want Statements	6/145	(4%)	
	Need Statements	11/145	(8%)	
Conventionally Indirect				Total: 44/145 (30%)
	Query Preparatory (ability, willingness, permission)	44/145	(30%)	
Non-conventionally Indirect (Hints)				Total: 20/145 (14%)
	Mild/Strong Hints	20/145	(14%)	
Opting Out of the Act		28/145	(19%)	Total: 28/145 (19%)

As shown in Table 9, adult ESL learners mainly employed direct strategies (37%) in their requestive email messages. In comparison, conventionally indirect strategies (30%) are closer to the direct strategies and non-conventionally indirect strategies (14%). The percentage of opting out of the act (not doing FTA) (19%) is prominently higher than expected considering the previous studies (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011).

Of all the direct strategies, imperatives are the most preferred strategy (17%). Need statements (8%) are closer to imperatives, followed by performatives (6%), want statements (4%), direct questions (1%) and expectation statements (1%).

Direct strategies involve expressive requestive force and are realized by the requests that are syntactically marked like imperatives (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). As can be seen in Table 9, the students preferred the direct strategies prominently more so than the other strategies. This might be a result of a number of reasons, including familiarity, being a non-native speaker of English and their proficiency levels.

The results indicated that regarding directness, adult ESL learners' requests in email messages tended to be direct, which approximates the results of the previous

interlanguage pragmatics studies. Most studies in the literature found that the students would rely on direct strategies extensively (Aribi & Amor, 2018; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Burgucu-Tazegul et al., 2016; Chen, 2006; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010).

Familiarity is a reason for preferring direct strategies more since familiarity raises directness (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Being a student at the school for a significant period might have resulted in acquaintanceship with the teacher, and the age proximity between the students and the teachers might have bolstered it. Although the students and the teachers have a formal relationship, they have been spending 4-5 days of the week in class together. Therefore, it would not be incorrect to claim the students could feel that they have known their teacher for some time. Using more informal language could be another indicator that supports that idea. An example from the data set is shown below where a greeting word considered too informal to greet the teacher was used.

Sample 1

Subject: Zoom Link Not Working Hey FN, I used the link for the zoom and it is not working. I cannot enter, please send me The correct link. Best, FN

This informality and inclination to direct strategies, however, might be the consequence of the email medium. The virtual world seems to bring some students a sense of freedom that they may not feel that they have in the classroom (Bloch, 2002). Emails will break down traditional barriers between teachers and students by removing the limits of time and space in a classroom (Hawisher & Moran, 1993).

L1 transfer is an obvious possibility for using direct strategies. Since the participants do not form a homogenous group due to their coming from different countries and thus L1, this claim cannot be supported with the statistical results in the data. However, other researchers who work with different L1 backgrounds also highlighted the effect of L1 transfer (Dombi, 2019; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2015).

Another explanation is the language proficiency. Learners with lower second language proficiency might be more concerned about conveying the expected illocution rather than the actual realization of the utterance (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Furthermore, the participants seem to try to ensure that their illocution was acknowledged. The asymmetrical power dynamics between the student and the teacher make these email requests very high stakes. The students might be concerned about sending an accurate message by using direct strategies, imperatives or mood derivables, in particular. Mood derivables or imperatives are the most preferred direct strategy, which can be said to convey the message in the shortest and most direct way. In addition, it is easier to mitigate the request using '*please*,' which is also the most preferred internal modifier. An example is shown below.

Sample 2

Subject: Homework, ESL LEVEL 5 Good evening Dear Nilay: My name is FN LN, please send me the video. Thank you FN LN ELS 5 EVE

Due to the contradictory nature of emails, communicating through written language can lead to serious misunderstandings. This situation is more complicated for L2 students, who may not be so familiar with the target culture's norms and values, or who lack the linguistic skills to convey implicit concepts that are difficult to convey in written language (Bloch, 2002). Furthermore, many students attending adult education have limited or interrupted formal schooling due to factors such as migration, civil unrest, war or not having the required resources and trained teachers in the schools they attended previously (Decapua & Marshall, 2010). The writing skill of those students, who are identified as students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), is visibly not the strongest language skill. Therefore, it is not difficult to assume that writing an email in the second language with the norms of the target culture would be challenging for the students, which may result in opting for a more straightforward way of expressing themselves. An example is given below.

Sample 3

Subject: dear nilay pleas you sand homework thank you FN *(in all small letters)*

However, being a non-native speaker is not the sole reason for using direct strategies. Although it is known that indirect strategies are used by native speakers for request realizations, comparative studies have indicated that native speakers also use direct strategies under some conditions (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Pan, 2012) and modified by a variety of lexical and syntactic devices. Those studies also reported that native speakers might also prefer mood derivables or imperatives, hedged performatives, and want-statements as direct strategies.

The degree of imposition is defined by (Brown & Levinson, 1987) as "a culturally and situationally defined ranking of impositions by the degree to which they are considered to interfere with an agent's wants of self-determination or of approval (negative and positive face wants)" (p. 77). The imposition is not the main focus of the study, but the previous studies showed that imposition has an effect on directness. In her comparative study, (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007) found that both native and non-native speakers resort to more direct strategies for lower imposition requests such as appointments and feedback. The requests in the data primarily consist of low imposition requests such as asking for homework or feedback; hence, high direct strategies might be related to the low imposition.

Conventionally indirect requests are the second most preferred strategy. In fact, these strategies are slightly lower than direct requests. Indirect strategies which were conventionalized in languages as requests are known as conventionally indirect strategies (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). With conventionally indirect strategies, the sender checks the receiver's capacity or readiness to comply with a request. An example from the data is given below:

Sample 4

Subject: About level 5 class
Hello,
This FN. I was in you class last semester. I am trying to restart my classes
this year again. I have received one email from them, telling me they would give me call about how to start me classes but I haven't heard back. I tried to contact the school but no one is answering. Can you help you me with some information how can I start my class online this year. Your help would be greatly appreciated.
Thank you,
FN LN
Sent from my iPhone

In the previous studies, it was found that native speakers mostly prefer the conventionally indirect strategies in their requests (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010).

Although this study does not explore the request uses of native speakers, it is important to note that previous interlanguage pragmatics studies showed that native speakers also prefer conventionally indirect strategies when they formulate their requests because the reason behind the conventionally indirect strategies might be the language exposure by the native speakers. Thanks to living in the USA and therefore being ESL learners, the participants have opportunities to interact with native speakers outside the classroom. As stated in the literature, ESL learners in time shift their request forms from direct to indirect, which has been explained with implicit learning (Chen, 2006).

In the studies where the requests of lower and higher learners' requests were compared, learners with higher proficiency seem to be able to approach the norms of the target language in terms of varying the level of the directness of requests when necessary, in different contexts and situations (Hendriks, 2002; House & Kasper, 1987; Trosborg, 1995). It is important to note that regarding language proficiency, the participants' language level is 5 on a scale from 0 to 8. This means they are at an intermediate level, which to some extent contradicts the previous literature. However, the ratio of conventionally indirect strategies might still be explained by the language proficiency of the students. Even though they are not an advanced or high intermediate level, when considering the varying proficiency level of the students, it may be assumed that some of the participants might have higher level writing skills. Because the placement into a level or promotion to the next level

is determined with the results of all four skills in the test, some students might have had high intermediate writing skills but have been in the level 5 class due to the lower scores of the other skills.

Conventionally indirect request strategies are used through query preparatory, which is to ask for the addressee's ability or willingness to fulfill the request and also soften the request imposition and save face for the recipient. With this in mind, it could be considered that imposition has an effect on the preference of conventionally indirect strategies. The previous studies showed that both native and non-native speakers prefer conventionally indirect strategies when formulating a request with a high imposition in order not to ask an uncomfortable question (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007).

There are several other possible explanations for why question preparatory could be a preferred method of request realization for adult ESL learners. An advantage of using conventionally indirect strategies is that such strategies are more effective thanks to the opportunity of mentioning a desired act explicitly and the potential of expressing a higher degree of politeness (Trosborg, 1995). This is an essential skill for a language learner, particularly in formal correspondence. With the help of query preparatory, the students can express themselves without implying, plus they can be politer than with direct expressions. Politeness is the key here because it is an interactional balance established between the need for pragmatic clarification and the need to prevent coercion (Blum-Kulka, 1987).

In the earlier studies of politeness, it was indicated that the most effective way for the receiver to save face while making a request is to use conventionally indirect strategies (Dombi, 2019; Trosborg, 1995). Another advantage of using a conventionally indirect strategy is to protect face. This dual face work is explained by Trosborg (1995):

> When employing a preparatory condition the requester also exhibits a protective orientation towards his/her own face in that he/she does not take compliance for granted. (p. 235)

Furthermore, conventionally indirect strategies allow the use of a great range of internal modifiers. An example is as follows:

Sample 5

Subject: About school Hello teacher, how are you? I hope fine, Im FN, your student. The reason for writing to you is to let you know that yesterday I did not receive the meeting ID for that reason you cannot enter classes This is my phone number XXX XXXXXXX I would appreciate it very much if you could send me the meeting id today thanks teacher

In the example above, the student was able to use a lexical modifier, subjectivizer (I would appreciate), and two syntactic modifiers; past tense (you could) and embedded if clause. Especially in high imposition requests, the students may have attempted to minimize the imposition and reduce the risk of face-threat to the receiver.

The other indirect strategy type is the group usually defined as hints. Non-conventional indirect strategies (hints) realize the request by making a partial reference to an element required for the completion of the act (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). In line with most of the studies in the literature, non-conventional indirect strategies are the lowest among the other strategies (Aribi & Amor, 2018; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Dombi, 2019; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, 2018).

Despite the parallelism with the many other previous studies in terms of having the lowest level of directness among the others, it is important to emphasize that the percentage of the results is distinctive. In the other studies mentioned in the literature, the use of non-conventionally indirect strategies has single digit percentages whilst it is 14%, which is approximately half of the conventionally indirect strategies in the present study.

Aribi & Amor (2018) explain the low percentage of non-conventionally indirect strategies with insufficient pragmalinguistic knowledge and asserts that years of English training in an EFL setting might have been insufficient to produce polite requests in English. In the same study, the importance of using authentic materials, including authentic academic email correspondence in the class, is emphasized. Likewise, in the other studies in EFL settings, the use of hints is the lowest (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2018), at least for the lower proficiency groups (Otcu & Zeyrek, 2008). The distinctive rate of the number of hints compared to the literature can also be explained with the setting in which the students learn the language. The participants of the present study live in an ESL setting, which could have helped them

to be more "native-like" regarding politeness strategies. Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) examined the request emails of students in an ESL setting and obtained a similar result. She observed that both native and non-native speakers did prefer non-conventionally indirect strategies for the requests with higher imposition. However, the non-native speakers used far fewer hints compared to the native speakers, probably because 'they do not know how to produce situation-appropriate hints' (p. 68). An example is below:

Sample 5

Subject: Test Issues Hello FN, I was reaching out because I was able to access the google docs where the article is but I couldn't get into the google forms because it says that I need permission. I think I can only access it if you give me permission to access it. Thank you, FN LN

Another plausible explanation for the higher use of hints than in the literature is the data collection method. Most studies that employed DCT as the data collection tool found very low numbers of use of hints (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992) probably because, in DCT, students are given a task to make a request, which does not have any social consequences (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007).

The relatively higher use of hints in the data might be associated with politeness. With hints, it can be surmised that they intended to complete the action by not threatening the receiver's face. In many studies using the CCSARP framework, politeness was found to be related to conventionally indirect strategies more (Blum-Kulka, 1987; House, 1986). However, definite comments are difficult to make because, as stated by Blum-Kulka & House (1989), "while the overall distribution along the scale of indirectness follows similar patterns in all languages, the specific proportions in the choices between the more direct and less direct strategies are culture-specific" (p. 133). Since the cultural backgrounds of the participants in this study are heterogenous, the motivation of using hints to some extent could be aiming to be polite because the concept of politeness varies across cultures.

As suggested in the literature previously (Weizman, 1989), the hints might have been preferred to secure the probability of 'legitimately denying some of its illocutionary and propositional components' (p.125). Weizman (1989) also stated that this has the

deniability potential for both sides. The requester may deny the request they made, and the requestee can ignore the request. It is also asserted that this potential is open to exploitation, exploitation as a communication strategy, in particular (Weizman, 1993). This means the participants may have avoided dealing with the conventional realizations of the target language. The comparatively higher number of the use of hints is a sign of using them as a communication strategy.

Although the number of direct strategies is the highest among the four strategy types, the total number of direct strategies (conventionally and non-conventionally indirect) is higher than direct strategies. This indicates that the participants could well be aware of the effect of indirect strategies on politeness. Indirect strategies are considered to be more polite because, as stated by Leech (1983), "(a) they increase the degree of optionality, and (b) because the more indirect an illocution is, the more diminished and tentative its force tends to be" (p. 108).

The last category is opting out of the act. That category was the third-highest strategy, which, to the researcher's knowledge, is different from the other studies in the literature.

Respecting each other's expectations about self-image, recognizing each other's feelings, and avoiding FTAs is a universal characteristic across cultures (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Brown & Levinson, 1987). When FTAs are inevitable, speakers can lessen the threat by using negative politeness that respects the negative face of the hearer. They may also use off-record strategies such as hints, metaphors, vague or ambiguous phrases, ellipses, and so on to redress the FTA (Cutting, 2002).

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010) offered the fourth option of 'don't do the FTA' (opting out of the act) to the directness level. A written DCT that comprised ten scenarios was used to collect the data, and some of the participants opted out of the act altogether in one scenario by refusing to request the fee as required in the scenario.

In another study where naturalistic emails were used as the data, the fourth option was offered for the emails with an attachment and no text, and the results showed that the number of those opting out of the act altogether was minimal (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). As stated in Chapter 3.2.4.2, following that adaptation, emails that

sent with an intention of getting feedback or assignment but with no text but an attachment or only a minimal text were analyzed under this category. An example is presented below.

Sample 6

Subject: >Essay ATTACHMENT

Those emails were sent to request an assignment or feedback. It is important to clarify here that these emails were not sent to fulfil an assignment or a task. The researcher contacted to the teachers to ask whether the students were asked to send those emails to submit a task or if the students sent the emails to demand the feedback to their written work. The emails sent to submit the homework but not to request feedback were not included in the study.

The number of those selecting the opting out of the act strategy is comparatively higher than the other studies. One of the reasons for this may be the cultural diversity of the participants as individuals from different cultures typically have divergent views on the social and contextual factors (Blum-Kulka & House, 1989; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010; Fukushima, 2000; Spencer-Oatey, 1993). Therefore, those differences in the participants' views of social reality may lead to differences in linguistic choices such as the choice of request strategy or directness level. They may have preferred not to do the face-threatening act and only send an email as they needed to receive the action or information from the teacher.

Another plausible explanation is related to the participants' digital literacy skills. First of all, sending an email only with an attachment 'violates the netiquette'; however, this information could be new for some. The immigrants in the USA who are likely to take ESL classes in adult education institutions are unlikely to be able to use a computer or even have access to a computer (McClanahan, 2014). Not knowing the etiquette in the digital world could result in digital impoliteness and sending only an attachment might be a strategy to avoid digital impoliteness. Second of all, the tech capabilities of some learners may impede their email writing process. An example is shown below.

Sample 7

Subject: Hello , Mr FN *(incorrect spelling)* I sent my paragraph . Thank you. ATTACHMENT

In this example, the student sent this email to ask for feedback for their paragraph; however, they opted out making the request and preferred only sending the paragraph. Also, the entire message is included in the subject line, and the email itself is left empty except for the attachment. Since the designated space for the subject line seems narrow and small, it is possible that the student desired brevity and added only the most necessary parts in that email. Digital skills are as crucial as pragmalinguistic skills when sending a requestive email; therefore, lacking digital skills may have affected the choice of strategy.

Although evaluating the directness of interlanguage requests is helpful to understand learners' use of language, it is critical to pay attention to different request modifications in order to observe how they attempt to minimize the face threats posed by their requests.

Internal Modifiers

Blum-Kulka & House (1989) defines internal modifiers as "elements within the request utterance proper (linked to the head act) the presence of which is not essential for the utterance to be potentially understood as a request" (p. 60). Internal modifiers serve as sociopragmatic instruments influencing the social effect of the utterance on the hearer (Faerch & Kasper, 1989). They can serve as downgraders, attempting to soften the request, or as upgraders, attempting to increase the coerciveness. Internal downgraders can be classified into two broad categories: lexical/phrasal modifiers, which include a large number of mitigating devices such as understaters and hedges, and syntactic modifiers, which include the past tense, progressive aspect and embedding clauses. Their presence is critical to eliciting an intended illocution.

In contrast to native speakers' use, previous studies have shown that language learners tend to underuse syntactic modifications while they would employ lexical modifications heavily (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006; Dombi, 2019; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007b; Pan, 2012;

Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010). The results of the present study are in line with the literature in this respect.

Table 10 Internal Modification: Syntactic and Lexical Modifiers in the Dataset

Lexical Modifiers				Total: 74/145 (51%)
	Please	57/145	(39%)	
	Downtoners	6/145	(4%)	
	Understaters	4/145	(3%)	
	Subjectivizers	6/145	(4%)	
	Consultive Devices	1/145	(1%)	
	Hedges	0		
Syntactic Modifiers				Total: 26/145 (18%)
	Embedding	9/145	(6%)	
	Progressive Aspect	1/145	(1%)	
Zero marking	Past Tense	16/145	(11%)	Total: 45/145 (31%)
Marked (total)				100/145 (69%)

As Table 10 shows, there is a dramatic difference between lexical (51%) and syntactic (18%) modifiers. It is also striking that approximately one-third of the emails (31%) were not internally modified at all.

With a closer look at lexical modifiers, it is notable that ESL learners primarily used '*please*' to mitigate their requests (39%). While downtoners (4%), subjectivizers (4%), understaters (3%) and consultive devices (1%) were barely used, hedges were not preferred at all.

The lexical modification marker '*please*' is by far the most common in the dataset, appearing in more than one-third of the requests. An example from the data is as follows.

Sample 8

Subject: Re: paragraph Good morning teacher, I modified my paragraph. Please help me to check. Thank you! Have good weekend! Liling ATTACHEMENT

This result is consistent with the findings of several other studies stressing learners' excessive use of the marker '*please'* (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Dombi, 2019; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; House & Kasper, 1987; Karatepe, 2016; Pan, 2012). According to Faerch & Kasper (1989), learners' ultimate preference for the marker '*please'* can be interpreted by its dual role as an illocutionary force indicator and a visible mitigator; therefore, students use it in both ways to appear respectful and to elicit an answer from the teacher (Chen, 2006). Language learners tend to adhere to Grice's principle of clarity (Grice, 1975) through the use of explicit and unambiguous means of speech, which the marker '*please*' facilitates (Faerch & Kasper, 1989).

Another reason behind the overuse of the marker '*please'* is the intention to be polite. Since the participants are in an ESL setting, they are constantly exposed to native English speakers in their everyday lives. For native English speakers, it is important to express politeness. In Sifianou's (1992) study, English speakers stressed the importance of using overt markers of politeness, such as verbally expressing appreciation and apologies, even in minor circumstances. It is also noted that formulaic phrases such as '*please*' or '*thank you'* are essential in their perception of politeness. Even if they do not have long talks with native speakers, it is very likely that learners use those formulaic expressions in their everyday lives, such as in a grocery store or on public transportation. Mimicking formulaic expressions with politeness concerns for ESL learners is not unexpected.

The other lexical modifiers, such as downtoners, subjectivizers, understaters and consultive devices, show very low frequency in the data, which is also in line with a number of studies in the literature (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008; Sifianou, 1992). The following example clearly illustrates this:

Sample 9

Subject: Fwd: FN LN posted a course update to ESL 5 Hospitality AM H SH: AM-FALL21 I'm sorry dear teacher for writing to late. I sent this message but it's "no-reply" so I think I need your help. FORWARDED MESSAGE

These results coincide with the studies on language learners' email requests to faculty. Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig (1996) commented that "NNS high imposition requests are more likely to be accompanied by fewer downgraders" (p. 61). Therefore, it is anticipated to see few examples of downtoners, subjectivizers, understaters and consultive devices based on the literature findings that show non-native speakers' tendency to overuse the marker '*please*' and underuse other lexical internal modifiers. Prior studies indicate that non-native speakers use linguistically complicated elaborate modification patterns less than native speakers (Hendriks, 2008; Woodfield, 2008). According to (Hendriks, 2008), underuse of internal modification can reflect negatively on a requester's personality and can lead to "negative stereotyping" (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996, p. 156) by native-speaker receivers.

Hedges, which are defined as adverbials that a speaker uses to avoid the possible provocation of a precise propositional specification (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), are not used as mitigators at all. This result is not surprising as even the studies that compare native and non-native speakers' requests, hedges have been found in few emails, if any (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010).

Although syntactic modifiers were not used as much as lexical modifiers, past tense modifiers (11%) are the highest among them. While the use of an embedding clause was found in 6% of the data, the progressive aspect syntactic modifier was found in only 1%. Additionally, 34% of the requests in the email messages were both syntactically and lexically unmodified.

It should be noted here that most of the past tense markers come from past modals. The distribution of the past tense markers in the data is as follows:

Table 11 Past Tense Markers

could	11/16	(69%)
would	4/16	(25%)
wanted	1/16	(6%)

A discussion has occurred about whether the past modals, such as *would* or *could*, should be coded as a past tense marker. According to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), with preparatory request strategies of the *can/could + I/you* form, the interrogative is not marked and thus should not be coded as a syntactic downgrader. Furthermore, past tense forms are marked as a modifier only when used for a present time reference, which means when their present tense forms can replace them without affecting the semantic meaning of the sentence (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). However, after the initial emergence of the coding scheme, many scholars discussed and altered the framework. Therefore, the past tense marker has been discussed and past modals have been adapted under the past tense marker. Hendriks (2010) added another category for the past modals, which "function as mitigating devices in that they add an element of conditionality to a request, which offers the addressee of a request an option to refrain from complying" (p. 227). In her study, Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) coded past modals as a syntactic modification device under the past tense (*could* instead of *can*). Following Biesenbach-Lucas (2007), the past modals were coded under the marker of past tense. It is worth noting here that despite using the same coding system, the results are dissimilar. She found that learners predominantly preferred the past tense markers as a politeness device; however, the ratio in the present study is only 11%.

Only one student in all the data used the simple past tense as a politeness device, as can be seen in the email is below.

Sample 10

Subject: Re: Class info at Carlos Rosario School Thank you so much! Just I wanted to know if I have some homework

In the remaining syntactically modified emails using the past tense, past modals were employed as shown in the example below.

Sample 11

Subject: Homework Dear Teacher, Today I can not go to class, could you please send me the homework? Sincerely, FN LN

It can be assumed that even though the learners might know the simple past tense, which is covered in the lower levels, they are not aware of the pragmatic function of the tense. As stated by Woodfield (2008), "the pragmatic function of such syntactic devices may take time to acquire, and learners may remain uncertain as to the effects on pragmatic clarity, resorting instead to lexical markings as islands of reliability in their pragmatic knowledge" (p. 245). That is, the structural knowledge reflects itself in the pragmatic use later in the process of language learning and acquisition.

The other syntactic internal modifier, the embedded clause, is observed in very low numbers in the data. When considering the grammatical complexity and the pragmatic function, it is not unexpected to see it few times in the data. English language learners tend to avoid complex structures and prefer those structures over which they have control. Schauer (2004) defines two types of embedding clauses used as politeness devices. The first is the appreciative embedding clause, which is defined as a device that "positively reinforced the request internally as hopes and positive feelings are stated" (p. 263). An example of this appreciative embedding can be found in Sample 5. However, it is found that the realization of embedded clauses in the data is predominantly achieved through the second type of embedding clause, namely tentative embedding, which is defined as a device that "makes the request appear less direct and shows hesitation" (Schauer, 2004, p. 263).

An example of a request using a tentative embedding clause from the data is presented below.

Sample 12

Subject: Re: Zoom Link Hi, Nilay I don't know if I can get another chance to see you on zoom that will be the last one this is about the google slides. Thanks.

In a rather small number of requests, there is more than one internal modifier, such as the following case, which has been syntactically changed and includes the marker '*please*' alongside a downtoner in the same request head act.

Sample 13

Subject: Re: Problems with internet Hi Teacher! Thank you for your answer. I'll be at home at 8:00, now I'm in my job. If it's possible, please call me at 8. Thank you again.

Although there are a few examples of the combination of more than one internal modifier in the data, it could be said that learners still underuse the internal modifiers, except for the marker '*please*'. Previous research has shown that native speakers of various languages often produce more and different combinations of lexical and syntactic modifiers than non-native speakers in comparable situations (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2009; Félix-Brasdefer, 2004, 2012; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Hassall, 2001; Trosborg, 1995; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010). Syntactic modifiers, in particular, are found to be used less frequently by the learner groups in almost all studies (House & Kasper, 1987; Otcu & Zeyrek, 2008; Sasaki, 1998; Schauer, 2004; Trosborg, 1995). Since the results of the present study are not different, some possible explanations will be discussed.

First of all, the learners might have preferred not to use the syntactic downgraders because their mitigating effect is more implicit than explicit. Since they are still learning the language, they may not be aware of the mitigating function of the syntactic structures because the mitigating feature of syntactic downgraders does not derive from the nature of their grammatical constituents (Faerch & Kasper, 1989). The mitigating function of the grammatical structures is a pragmatic feature, which a

language learner may not yet have sufficient competency. As another option, they might be aware of the mitigating feature but are still uncertain about the impact on pragmatic clarity (Woodfield, 2008). Moreover, it is worth noting that employing these syntactic forms with its mitigating feature necessitates a higher degree of pragmatic competence, particularly awareness of sociopragmatic knowledge of the rules in the academic context such as the social status of any participants or politeness (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993). What is important to highlight here is that the general profile of adult ESL learners differs from college students with regard to time spent at school. Many did not have college experience, which might explain the insufficient knowledge about the rules of the academic context. In her study where native and non-native speakers' email requests were analyzed, Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) found that at least half of their email requests were modified by adding syntactic politeness devices. However, all the participants were graduate-level students at a university. It is not difficult to assume that they are likely to know the rules of the academic context. However, this is not the case with the participants of the present study.

Apart from the overall use of internal modifiers, the results indicate that approximately one-third of the requests in the email messages were left internally unmodified, as can be seen in the example below:

Sample 14

Subject: First day of School Hi teacher how are you? Teacher, I need to now how can I connect to class today? Thank you FN Sent from my iPhone

The overuse of zero marking through internal modifiers is consistent with the results of previous studies (Otcu & Zeyrek, 2008; Trosborg, 1995; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010). The studies that compared native and non-native speakers' requests have revealed that learners do not use internal modifiers as frequently as native speakers (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008, 2009; House & Kasper, 1987). The overuse of zero-marking internal modifiers is first explained by the linguistic abilities of the learners. Internal modifiers require linguistic skills, which

the students may yet lack. They need to use their linguistic skills to add complex structures to the head act of the request. Bardovi-Harlig (1999) also asserted the linguistic capacity that students need to use internal modifiers:

> In play-downs [past tense, progressive, modals, negation, interrogative] a speaker draws on knowledge of modals, tense and aspect, and on syntactic knowledge of negation and question formation. With hedges and understaters a speaker must have enough syntax to properly position them in the sentence. With consultative devices and scopestaters a learner needs knowledge of the complements that particular formulas take and with agent avoiders, the learner needs to know formation and use of passive. (pp. 690-691)

A number of studies examining requests have focused on oral production. The mental process that the speakers need to undergo has to be quicker compared to written production. Therefore, it is expected that the results of internal modifiers on the written requests would be different from the oral requests. Moreover, because the data of the current study come from naturalistic emails, they presumably "had time to plan their utterances and draw on their existing pragmalinguistic repertoire" (Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010, p. 95). However, in the aforementioned studies, the learners internally modified their requests significantly less, even with those using written elicited tasks. It is also important to bear in mind the potential struggle of using an electronic device.

4.2.2. External Modifiers

External modifiers also act as supportive moves and for requests. These moves include apologizing, obtaining a pre-commitment, grounders that precede or follow the head act. With external modifiers, the head act is not directly affected; however, the context is modified. Therefore, the illocution is indirectly affected as stated by (Blum-Kulka, 2012): "mitigation can index politeness regardless of levels of directness" (p. 266). Similar to internal modifiers, external modifiers can soften or aggravate the illocutionary force.

Senders may elect to make external modifications, or supportive moves, in order to minimize the face threat posed by a request. While 89% of the requests in the emails are externally modified (typically with more than one move), 11% of the requests do

not include any external modifiers. The number of zero markings shows that in comparison to internal modification, it appears that the participants would rely more heavily on external modifications (such as grounders, orientation moves or sweeteners).

It is worth touching upon the 'waffle phenomenon' by Edmondsom & House (1991) here, who explain the overuse of a particular linguistic form to fulfill a specific, pragmatic aim. It is also discussed that "learners evidence a significantly greater tendency to waffle than do native speakers" (p. 274). Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1986) claim that learners *waffle* by overusing supportive moves more compared to native speakers to ensure their message is conveyed and due to their lack of confidence.

Table 12 External Modification: Supportive Moves in the Emails

Greeting/ Opening	120/145	(83%)
Self-introduction	16/145	(11%)
Grounder	20/145	(14%)
Disarmer	0	
Preparator	1/145	(1%)
Getting a precommitment	1/145	(1%)
Promise	0	
Imposition minimizer	2/145	(1%)
Apology	2/145	(1%)
Orientation move	25/145	(17%)
Complement/Sweetener	10/145	(7%)
Pre-closing	15/145	(10%)
Email closing	93/145	(64%)
Zero marking	16/145	(11%)
Marked (total)	129/145	(89%)

As Table 12 indicates, the highest percentage of external modifiers are greetings (83%) and closings (64%). In addition to email closings, 10% of the emails contain a pre-closing modifier. The orientation move (17%) and grounder (14%) are the most preferred external modifiers following opening and closing. 11% of the requests in the emails are not externally modified. Some of the messages include a self-introduction (11%) or a complement/sweetener (7%). While only obtaining a pre-commitment, preparator, imposition minimizer, and apology modifiers were rarely used (1%), with none of the messages having disarmers or promises.

In line with the previous studies (Dombi, 2019; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008; Pan, 2012; Wei-Hong Ko et al., 2015; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010), in most of the emails (89%), external modifiers were used. The most preferred external modifier is the greeting/opening (83%), and the closing follows with 64%. The high number of greetings and closings might be the result of attempting to be polite. Since all of these students are adults, they could well know the importance of using a greeting and a closing in a letter or an email on politeness. It is particularly significant in a formal email because it could be proposed that a letter or email greeting can be asserted as traditional common ground for politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). "S can thereby stress his general interest in H and indicate that he hasn't come to see H simply to do the FTA (e.g., a request)" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 117). This positive politeness strategy to soften requests requires pragmatic knowledge, which can be claimed that the participants have sufficient pragmatic knowledge to write a polite, formal email, as presented in the example below:

Sample 15

Subject: Homework. Dear Nilay. Good evening, teacher can you please send me the homework and explain about this. Thank you. FN LN

Apart from opening and closing, most often, the emails are modified with orientation moves (17%) and grounders (14%). In many other studies, the grounder was the most preferred external modifier (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008, 2009, 2011; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Hassall, 2001; House & Kasper, 1987; Otcu & Zeyrek, 2008; Schauer, 2007). An example for an email with a grounder move is presented below:

Sample 16

Subject: Homework
Good morning!!
Hi teacher, I need more information for the title at homework, because I do not remember the title.
Thank you so much.
Have a nice day.
sincerely.

Hassall (2001) observes a similar redundancy in learners' grounding use. He claims that learners depend on overexplicit discourse markers "to clarify the logical relation between grounder and head act" (p. 269). This may create "a distinctly non-native effect" (p. 270).

An orientation move primarily serves as an opening remark for the body section of the email, indicating the direction of the message. An example of the orientation move is as follows:

Sample 17

Subject: Homework
Dear Nilay,
I write to know what is the homework that I need to make. Can you please send me the information?
Thank you,
FN.

Orientation moves also have an interpersonal function in order to emphasize the interlocutors' shared knowledge.

As Faerch & Kasper (1989) stated, the possible reason for using grounders and orientation moves might be "giving reasons, justifications and explanations for an action opens up an empathetic attitude on the part of the interlocutor in giving his or her insight into the actor's underlying motive(s)" (p. 239).

Although closing is observed in almost one-third of the emails, pre-closing is preferred in only 10%. An example of an email with pre-closing (i.e. Thank you) is shown below:

Sample 18

Subject: Homework
Dear teacher,
Could you send homework for me ? I can do it at home .
Thank you.
Best,
Liling

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) states that pre-closings may easily affect the email negatively due to the presupposition that the request will be fulfilled because "such a presupposition in hierarchical relationships can be seen as quite inappropriate, even when the request falls within the students' rights and the faculty's obligations" (p. 3208). It can also be discussed that in order to reduce the coercive effect, a variety of closings rather than the usual ones are also observed. One example is as follows:

Sample 19

Subject: Matting AI: and password Spanish computer.
Ms. FN, It would be possible for her to send me the Matting AI: and password the Spanish computer class for today.
Thanks
I appreciate your kindness.
FN LN
Enviado desde mi iPhone

In summary, the overall use of external modifiers shows that the students prefer external modifiers to internal modifiers, which could be explained with the politeness concerns of the students as well as the other reasons discussed above. However, when broken down, it can be seen that the majority of the external modifiers preferred by the learners are openings and closings of the email. Other external modifiers, such as apologies, disarmers or imposition minimizers, were used rarely if at all. Therefore, it would be difficult to discuss verbosity as in the other studies in which overuse of external modifiers was observed. As House & Kasper (1987) discuss, the participants could have faced linguistic and social difficulties. They assert that linguistic pressure causes less speaking compared to native speakers due to the concern of making mistakes. When the level and social situation of the students are taken into consideration, the hypothesis sounds plausible since external modifiers apart from greetings and closings were underused. It is likely that when they send a formal email

to their teachers, the students would experience linguistic difficulty, and that pressure may have caused them to write emails that are as short as possible.

4.2.3. Request Perspectives

The results of the use of request perspectives are presented below.

Table 13 Request Perspectives

Impersonal	6/105	(5.7%)
We	1/105	(1%)
You	72/105	(68.5%)
I	26/105	(24.8%)

It should be noted that the emails where the students opted out of the act were eliminated in the request perspective analysis. Likewise, some emails where mild hints were used were not counted within the perspective since the request was not sufficiently clear to show the perspective.

As far as request perspectives are concerned, the highest percentage is seen with the "you" perspective (68.5%). While 24.8% of the "I" perspective is used, the impersonal (5.7%) and "we" (1%) perspectives are rarely used in the data.

The most preferred perspective is the hearer-oriented perspective, which can be related to the high numbers of imperative strategies and query preparatories, which ask for the receiver's ability to do the action. An example from the dataset is as follows:

Sample 20

Subject: My Homework
Hello teacher! How are you?
Can you send my homework ,please?
thank you so much!
FN

The second most preferred request perspective is the speaker-oriented perspective, which can be explained with the number of want and need statements as well as strong hints, where the sender is explicitly identified as the requester. An example is below:

Sample 21

Subject: class Hi FN, this is FN LN I would like to know about the class.. I don't see any at the class..

The impersonal perspective and *we* perspective rarely occurred in the data. When a qualitative investigation is made into every impersonal request perspective, it is found that four of the total of six impersonal requests were made through interrogative words. An example of an impersonal request is as follows:

Sample 22

Subject: homowork Good morning teacher.what is our homework today? Thank you FN

As the example indicates, the impersonal requests do not have a complex linguistic structure; instead, the students preferred a more straightforward interrogative sentence. Although an impersonal perspective such as, '*would it be possible*' are more positive and therefore more appropriate (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007), the impersonal structures observed in the dataset are structurally different from those that native speakers would use in a formal email. The request with such a direct interrogative sentence reinforces the directness and probably coerciveness of the request. In Biesenbach-Lucas's (2007) study, both native and non-native speakers of English preferred impersonal perspectives in their requests. However, it is important to note that in Biesenbach-Lucas's (2007) study, the English level of the participants was higher than the participants in the current study as the former were graduate-level students who were enrolled in a TESOL program. The number of the impersonal perspectives and the structures of impersonal perspectives are strikingly different from those in the current study. The language level difference probably plays an important role in the choice of perspective. The results coincide with the findings of Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010), where the impersonal perspective was infrequent in the learner data. Similarly, Zhu (2012a) and Dombi (2019) observed no impersonal request perspective in the learner data. In line with Zhu (2012a), the findings show that the participants of the present study do not have 'abundant pragmalinguistic competence' (p. 231).

The literature suggests that the requests perspective shifts as the level improves. Trosborg (1995) observes a transition from hearer-based to speaker-based strategies as the educational level rises. Since the level of the participants can be defined as intermediate or high intermediate, it can be assumed that they have already developed some sort of various forms, which can to some extent explain the speaker perspective data, which forms one quarter of all request perspectives. It can be concluded that as they linguistically progress, their pragmalinguistic repertoire also develops.

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4.2.4. Forms of Address

The results of the students' use of address forms are indicated below.

Table 14 Forms of Address

Use of 'Dear'	18/145	(12%)
Omission of 'Dear'	11/145	(8%)
Use of Greeting	75/145	(52%)
Zero Forms	41/145	(28%)

Forms of address show variation in the messages. Although there are several grammatically unacceptable constructions, they can still be considered pragmatically acceptable considering the linguistic skills of the senders. Almost half of the students preferred to use the address form with a greeting (52%). What is striking here is that a considerable number of the messages contains no forms of address (28%). While 12% of students prefer to use the deference word '*dear*', it is not used in 8% of the messages.

Since there is a great variety in the data with regard to forms of address, the four main titles were broken down into groups. The results are presented in Table 15.

Table 15 Forms of Address (detailed)

Use of '*Dear*'			Total: 18/145 (12.4%)
	Dear + first name	13/145	9%
	Dear + teacher	4/145	2.70%
	Dear + teacher + first name	1/145	0.70%
Omission of '*Dear*'			Total: 11/145 (7.6%)
	First name	5/145	3.40%
	Title + first name	3/145	2.10%
	Teacher	2/145	1.40%
	Title	1/145	0.70%
Use of Greeting			Total: 75/145 (51.7%)
	Greeting + teacher	29/145	20%
	Greeting + name	24/145	16.60%
	Greeting + title + first name	13/145	9%
	Greeting + teacher + first name	3/145	2.10%
	Greeting + dear	1/145	0.70%
	Greeting + dear + first name	1/145	0.70%
	Greeting + title + last name	2/145	1.40%
	Greeting + title	1/145	0.70%
	Greeting + first name + last name	1/145	0.70%
Zero forms			Total: 41/125 (28.3%)
	No address form	21/145	14.50%
	Greeting	20/145	0.00%

As seen in Table 15, there are a range of structures being used, and while a few preferred formal greetings such as a title (e.g., *Miss*), most of the students preferred informal address forms, such as the first name after the salutation word.

The most noteworthy result is the use of greeting with the address words. More than half of the students preferred to start their emails with a greeting. A deeper investigation shows that 20% of the students preferred using '*teacher*' after the greeting word such as *hi/hello/good morning*. Using the first name after the greeting is the second most used form in the group (16.6%). While 9% of the students used the first names of their teachers after a greeting, only a few students (0.7%) preferred using the first name after using '*teacher*'.

Another significant result is that 28.3% of the students used no address words. While 14% of them used greeting only (e.g., *Good Evening*), 14.5% used no address form at all; they started their emails with the message directly.

The most intriguing result is the use of the deference word '*dear*.' While 12.4% of the students preferred using the word '*dear,*' not every student used it in a pragmatically appropriate manner. 9% of the students used the Dear + First Name (FN) structure, which can be accepted as an appropriate form of address, 2.7% used the Dear + Teacher format, which is not common in regular student-faculty communication. The word '*dear*' is expected to be used with the title and name; however, none of the students used '*dear*' in that form.

Some students preferred using the name itself without the deference word '*dear*' (7.6%). While some students used the first name only (3.4%), some used the title before the first name (2.1%). Very few students used the word '*teacher*' after '*dear*' (1.4%), and 0.7% used only the title after '*dear*.'

The results indicated that the students preferred informal forms of address over formal address. This may be due to the institute being an adult school where the age gap between the students and faculty is not significant. In her study where the email requests of university students to the faculty were investigated, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) found that the students preferred to use the deference word the most. The most distinct difference is probably the academic difference and social status

between the student and the teacher. In a university setting where most of the faculty has academic titles, there is an expectation to use more formal language and the academic titles. Addressing a professor with their first name may not be accepted as appropriate in many cultures, whereas it is not always the case in adult schools. Therefore, it is very likely that no Dear + Last Name or Full Name structure is observed in the dataset because of that informal relationship. This also might be related to the culture they live in. English does not have the formal/informal 'you' difference and the US culture could be relatively more informal compared to some other cultures. The studies done in EFL context indicated that the students preferred more formal address words (Burgucu-Tazegul et al., 2016; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Pan, 2010) The students might have felt more comfortable choosing informal forms of address than the students in an EFL context.

The results also contradict with the Economidou-Kogetsidis (2018) study such that most address forms were found to be formal. However, the participants of that study were university students, as well; therefore, more formal address forms are, again, expected.

Another notable result is the frequency of the word '*teacher*' in the dataset. In US culture, addressing the teacher with the word '*teacher*' may not be considered appropriate and polite, whereas in many other cultures, it is often an honorific title. Probably because of that, non-native speakers would tend to address their teachers as '*teacher*' instead of with their titles.

Some of the forms of address were grammatically incorrect or unacceptable, such as using the deference word without the title or name (e.g., '*Hi Dear'*). Those forms would possibly create pragmatic infelicity. Some other forms may not cause pragmatic infelicities; instead, they might be perceived as being too direct and therefore impolite, such as using only the first name without a deference word.

To conclude, a range of address words were observed in the data, and those results are in line with the previous literature (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, 2018; Gains, 1999; Gimenez, 2000). Such variety of address words as well as the relatively high number of zero forms could be an indication of uncertainty of the students. As Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) states, the students "…in general might be equally unsure about

what is appropriate and preferred when it comes to e-mail communication with faculty" (p. 3209). The confusion the students might experience and the pragmatically inappropriate address forms are clear signs of insufficient pragmatic knowledge. As immigrants in a different culture and as non-native speakers of the language, they may well require more practice or input relating to addressing people formally.

4.3. Results on Email Components

In order to have a clearer picture of the emails, three parts of the emails, namely the subject line, openings and closings, were identified. While their function as the supportive move was discussed in the previous chapter, a deeper qualitative investigation is presented in this chapter.

As Crystal (2001) states, "at one level, it is extremely easy to define the linguistic identity of e-mail as a variety of language; at another level, it is surprisingly difficult" (p. 94). Even though the discourse structure is fixed, the purpose of the email and hence the appropriate use of language to achieve that purpose may vary in different cultural or subcultural settings.

In addition, although email is written language, it has been argued that it contains speech-like features. Capital letters, punctuation markers, emoticons and emojis substitute non-verbal cues. Nonetheless, emails, formal ones in particular, have a standard format which resembles business letters with a greeting, an opening, a body and a closing.

Although emails and traditional letters serve different purposes, they both have similar functional elements. Not surprisingly, despite both following an epistolary format, the terminology differs. Emails have a bipartite form with a header part that includes email addresses, date, time and subject, which is a brief explanation of the content of the email, and the body part that includes the message. For the corpus of the study, only the subject line is included in the analysis, and the preformatted parts in the header section were excluded. The email parts were coded based on an adapted coding system of Zhu (2012a) based on the frameworks of Bhatia (1993), Blum-Kulka (1984) and Swales (1990).

The coding system used for the study is as follows:

1. Subject Line
2. Opening
3. Body (supportive moves and head acts)
4. Closing

Examples from the dataset are presented below:

Sample 23

Subject: Schedule (Subject Line) Hello teacher, (Opening) I am FN, what time does our class begin? We will study on zoom or other ways? Also, I can't use school'a laptop, I remembered my school email address is: xxxxxx@cr.calosrosario.org. But it is telling me your address or password were wrong. Could you help me? (Body) Thank you so much! Best, (Closing) FN

Sample 24

Subject: Homework. (Subject Line) hello (Opening) I want to ask you about the computer class very interesting. I'll be off from work for a week starting on wednesday maybe you can help me to learn more about it technology ! (Body) Thank you ! (Closing)

The generally accepted standards are not observed in each email. The preference for each part of the email varies in the dataset. An instance of a salutation is presented below.

Sample 25

Subject: hello how are you !! (Subject Line) / (Opening) i want to know about homework can you explain please (Body) thank you sincerely (Closing) FN LN.

After the data was coded, the word count, fonts and the use of emojis and emoticons were investigated. The fonts observed are Arial, Calibri and Times New Roman in font

sizes of 11 and 12. The font sizes are consistent in each email; that is, not one part of the message is larger or smaller than the remainder of the email. Only in one email is the salutation part all capital letters, while the remainder of the message is lowercase. Similarly, in one email, while the entire email was written in lower-case letters, only the student's name was entirely in capital letters. There are no emoticons or emojis in the emails. None of the email messages are bolded, and only one email is italicized.

It can be assumed from the results that the students tended to keep the default font of the device from which they were sending the email. Although emoticons and emojis are heavily used in instant messaging, not being used in the emails of the data could indicate that the participants may be aware of the informal effect that emojis could bring to a formal email. In addition to that, the use of a computer to send the email could have caused the avoidance of using emojis. The emoji interfaces of computers and cellphones are different and the students might not know how to insert an emoji to an email in an web browser.

The details of the word count are shown below:

Table 16 Word Count

Longest email message	87 words
Shortest email message	0 words
Average	18.6 words

The average number of words in the emails is 18.6, excluding the subject line. The longest email so far has 87 words and the shortest email message has no words in the body part due to reasons such as having the message in the subject line.

The average word count is 18.6, which means that overall, the emails are not too long. This result may be related to the instant messaging in which world we live. As instant messaging culture has spread, brevity in messages prevails. Whereas instant messages focus on contact rather than content, email is used to share information and promote longer-distance relationships (Longmate & Baber, 2002). Due to its convenience and appropriacy for distant education, the use of email in the academic setting has gained even more importance. Another possible reason for shorter emails could be related to

the writers' linguistic abilities, their possible insecurities in the language and their resorting to avoidance strategies. With the effort of avoiding verbosity and potentially making more linguistic mistakes, the writers would avoid longer sentences.

The numbers of the components found in the emails are presented below:

Table 17 Email Components

Subject Line	138/145	(95%)
Opening/Greeting	120/145	(83%)
Closing/Name	97/145	(67%)

Note: The number of closings is different from the numbers counted with the external modifiers because if the student did not use a closing and only wrote a name, it was counted as an email component under closing/name, but not as an external modifier, which is only 'closing' in the framework.

Table 17 shows the frequency of the main elements of an email used by the students. Although some of the elements are pragmatically inappropriate, the majority (95%) of the students used a subject in their emails. Similarly, 83% of the emails start with a greeting. Some of these greetings are used in an incorrect place, such as in the subject line instead of in the message part, but since they exist in the email, they can be considered to have mitigation or politeness purposes. Finally, there is a closing (67%) in more than half of the emails, some of which also have a pre-closing modifier. Moreover, some students preferred to write their names while others opted not to do so.

4.3.1. The Subject Line

The subject line serves as the title of the email and it is expected to include a brief description of the message. The language in the subject line is not less important than the remainder of the email as it is the first message the recipient receives. Crystal (2001) defines the subject line as a critical element in the 'decision-making over what priority to assign to it or whether to open it at all (in the case of someone who receives many e-mails every day)' (p. 95).

The details of the subject line are presented in the table below:

Table 18 Subjects in the Emails

Informative Subject	98/145	67.6%
Re:	17/145	11.7%
Greeting	16/145	11%
No Subject	7/145	4.8%
Message in the Subject	6/145	4.1%
Fwd:	1/145	0.7%
Subjects (total)	138	95.2%

The results indicate that 67.6% of the participants preferred a short and informative subject. 11.7% of the students replied to an email sent previously; therefore, their subjects start with 'Re:'. While 11% of the students put a greeting in the subject, 4.8% typed the entire message in the subject line. No subjects were observed in 4.8% of the emails. Similar to replying, only in 1% of the emails was the subject found to start with 'Fwd:', meaning forwarding a previous email.

As the name implies, the subject line consists of a single line and has a character limitation, which may change depending on the email provider. A lengthy message in the subject line would be truncated and may fail to convey an intended message. The subject line is recommended to contain a concise, clear and relevant description of the message. The findings show that 67.6% of the students seem to realize that expectation. Using a greeting in the email will probably not include the topic of the message, so it should be avoided. However, as can be seen in Sample 26, 11% of the emails have their greetings in the subject. Although it is polite to start an email with a greeting, not having a topic description may unintentionally breach standard email etiquette as well as Gricean maxims (Grice, 1975). This may also indicate that they are likely to be unaware of the function of the subject line. It is possible that the student had wanted to start their email with a salutation and used the subject for that purpose. Similarly, 4.1% of the emails contain an entire message in the subject line with an empty body part. To draw an analogy between an email and a letter, having the entire message in the subject line would be akin to writing a letter on an empty envelope. It does not appear professional in business or official correspondence; hence, it is to be

avoided. However, when considering the amount of computer or email exposure that some of the participants presumably received, they may not yet have the sufficient pragmatic knowledge to compose a formal email. 4.8% of the emails do not include a subject. Because it is a crucial element of an email, most email applications ask whether the user is certain about sending the email without a subject. An email without a subject may leave the reader with a negative impression, which can result in viewing the writer of the email as being unprofessional, inefficient and even irritating (Resendes et al., 2012).

4.3.2. Openings and Closings

In an email, the message in the body is expected to be preceded by an opening and followed by a closing. In spite of not being mandatory, a formal email typically has both. The opening of an email may include a salutation or an address word, or both. 83% of the emails in the data have some type of opening, which means that the students are aware of the impact of using a greeting in an email.

The greeting in a written text may function as small talk (Brown & Levinson, 1987), in which the speaker attempts to engage the listener by having a conversation about random issues.

The email openings found in the dataset are presented in the table below:

Table 19 Openings in the Emails

Hello	35/145	24%
Hi	34/145	23%
Good morning/afternoon/evening	27/145	19%
Dear	16/145	11%
FN	7/145	5%
Hey	1/145	1%
No openings	25/145	17%
Openings (total)	120/145	83%

As the table above shows, the salutations '*hello*' (24%) and '*hi*' (23%) are the most preferred openings. Similarly, 19% of the students also used the '*good morning/*

good afternoon/ good evening' format when they started their messages. The deference word '*dear*' appeared less frequently compared to the other salutations. 5% of the students preferred to use the teacher's first name when starting their emails and only 1% of the emails started with '*hey*.' In 17% of the emails, no openings were observed.

The closings are categorized into three main groups: Thanks, Complimentary Closings, Signing off with a name and others, as presented in the table below:

Table 20 Closings in the Emails

Thanks	65/145	45%
Complimentary Formulaic Expressions	24/145	17%
Signing off with a name	6/145	4%
Others	2/145	1%
No closings	48/145	33%
Closings (total)	97/145	67%

As the table indicates, almost half of the emails were closed with a gratitude expression (45%). This includes all formulaic endings such as '*Thank you*,' '*Thanks*' or '*I really appreciate it*.' 17% of the students used complimentary closings, which refer to "some good wishes or epistolary forms which the email writers used to give good wishes or compliments to the recipients" (Zhu, 2012a, p. 139). In 4% of the emails, the participants signed off with a name only. In the other groups (not in all, but most), the students also wrote their names at the end of the email; however, there are no other closing expressions in this group other than the name. 1% of the data is grouped as other, which contains a non-English closing. Two participants used '*Att*' as a closing, which is likely to be used as an abbreviation of the Spanish word *atentamente*, which means *sincerely*. The linguistic and/or pragmatic incompetence causes the learner to feel unable to fulfill the need for a closing remark that they feel. Avoiding impoliteness at this point may result in a transfer from the first language. The first language being Spanish, the second most commonly used language in the country, may have given the learner a room to feel safer to make a transfer from the first language. In 33% of the emails, there are no closing remarks nor their names.

The results of the overall opening and closing preferences highlighted the informal tone of the emails. Although a student's email to the teacher is most likely to be a formal one, the students used everyday expressions in their emails. This is an indicator of the need to build on the sociopragmatic competence of the students. Moreover, the overall informal tone in the openings, in particular, might be a result of the students' effort to reduce distance and social difference. Not being a college setting, but an adult school could have an effect on this. It could also be related to *association rights* (Spencer-Oatey, 2000), and they might have expected to maintain a stronger and closer relationship with the teacher. Using *hi, hello* or *hey* as an opening might be the tendency to attend 'equity rights' (Zhu, 2012a).

Using a gratitude expression as a closing is not unexpected in request emails, which also indicates that the students might not consider its coercive effect. When taking the lower percentage of complimentary expressions into consideration, it shows that the students may not yet have sufficient pragmalinguistic knowledge to use a formal closing in English. Two incidents of using the closing marker in Spanish also support the idea that those students were probably aware of the need of using a formal closing but did not know the necessary vocabulary in English. Therefore, it should be once highlighted that the adult learners can benefit from explicit pragmatic teaching for also the electronic setting.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1. Presentation

This chapter begins with a brief summary of the main findings. Next, the implications for interlanguage pragmatics and English as a second language are presented. Finally, the limitations of the study are addressed, and suggestions for future studies are discussed.

5.2. Summary of Findings

The main aim of the study is to investigate adult ESL students' requestive emails to the faculty and acquire a deeper understanding of both their request head-acts use and the pragmatic competence to send a formal email. To fulfill the aim and probe the requests in emails, the data were collected through the naturalistic emails of ESL students. A total of 145 naturally occurring request emails of adult ESL learners sent to the faculty were analyzed. One of the advantages of using naturally occurring data is to avoid the observer paradox. Because the data selection process started after the emails were sent, the research process had no effect on the emails the students sent. These emails were not solicited from the students; rather, they emerged organically from the student-faculty communication context. After identifying the request emails among all the other emails, the data were transferred to MAXQDA2020, which is a software package used to code and analyze the data. The requests in the email messages were analyzed with an adapted model of the CCSARP framework, which was first developed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). An appropriate formal email is expected to include all optional parts of an email in a pragmalinguistically correct form. Therefore, the email components of the emails were analyzed based on an adapted model of the framework of Zhu (2012a).

A summary of the findings in relation to the research questions is presented below.

1. *What are the subject choices of adult ESL learners in formal emails?*

In almost every email, the subject line was marked by the students. In general, the participants were able to use an informative subject that could provide a clue about the topic of the email. However, it is also observed that there are cases of writing a greeting or the whole message in the subject line instead of the designated body part. The number of emails without a subject is infrequent, which is a sign that the students are familiar with the subject line and might know that it is an essential part of an appropriate formal email.

2. *What forms of openings and closings do adult ESL learners employ when sending an email to their teachers?*

Overall, the participants employed openings and closings in their emails, although closings were used less frequently than openings. Moreover, both openings and closings were predominantly informal. The openings with a more informal tone, such as '*Hello*' or '*Hi*', overrun the formal greeting '*Dear*'. While closing the email, almost half of the students used gratitude words such as '*Thanks*' or '*Thank you*,' and formal closings such as '*Sincerely*' or '*Regards*' were observed infrequently in the data. While a few students decided to close their emails with a name only, one-third of the emails were left without a closing.

3. *What forms of address do adult ESL learners use in formal emails when they send an email to the faculty?*

The students mostly resorted to informal forms of address with the first name of the teacher. The formal address forms, such as using the title and the last name, are infrequent in the data. It is also found that the students preferred to address the faculty member with the word '*teacher*' with or without preceding the first name. It is also found that the students mostly made use of a greeting such as '*hi'* or '*hello'* before the address word. The deference word 'dear' was not preferred by most of the participants, which corresponds to the overall informal tone of the emails.

4. *What is the level of directness observed in the adult ESL learners' email messages to the faculty?*

The level of directness is categorized into four main groups: direct strategies, conventionally indirect strategies, non-conventionally indirect strategies (hints) and opting out of the act. The findings show that the overall tendency of the participants is to use direct request strategies. Among all direct strategies, the most preferred strategy is imperatives/mood derivable. The students also preferred 'want' and 'need statements' as well as performatives. The second most preferred strategy is conventionally indirect strategies. Almost one-third of the participants made their requests with query preparatory strategy (i.e., '*can/could/would'* questions). Another notable point is the number of emails where the request act was opted out. Almost one-fifth of the participants preferred to opt out of the act in their emails. The least observed strategy is non-conventionally indirect strategies (hints). The findings highlighted that the students for the most part preferred making their requests explicitly with direct or conventionally indirect strategies. Non-conventionally indirect strategies could require slightly more pragmalinguistic skills to form a polite, formal email, which might have caused the participants to avoid using that strategy. Despite being lower than direct and conventionally indirect strategies in the data, interestingly, the number for opting out of the act is higher than the findings of previous studies in the literature. This can be explained with the possible lower-tech skills of the participants in addition to an avoidance of the face-threatening act.

5. *What internal modifiers do adult ESL learners use to mitigate the illocutionary force of the requests in an email?*

Internal modifiers are analyzed under three main categories: lexical modifiers, syntactic modifiers and zero markings. Approximately half of the emails are internally modified through lexical modifiers. In almost one-third of the emails, no internal modifiers are observed at all. The literature showed that non-native speakers have the tendency to overuse the zero marking with internal modifiers, which can be explained by the linguistic competency and the digital setting that the participants were required to deal with.

The results also showed that the students have tendencies to avoid syntactic modifiers. When looking at each item under these categories, it can be clearly observed that the

marker '*please*' is the most prominent downgrader. The other lexical modifiers that are downtoners, subjectivizers, understaters and consultive devices, are used infrequently. Hedges, on the other hand, are not used at all.

We can see that the lexical modifier '*please*' is the most used modifier among both internal and syntactic modifiers. The participants' heavy reliance on '*please*' as a politeness marker is not unanticipated as '*please*' as a politeness marker is a cross-culturally shared mitigator (Ogiermann, 2009b).

The most preferred syntactic modifier is the past tense. However, among all internal modifiers, the past tense to mitigate the request is observed still in low numbers. Embedding clauses are used even less frequently than past tense, and the progressive aspect is used only in one email. It can be interpreted that using syntactic modifiers to mitigate a request requires paralinguistic skills, which the intermediate level participants may still lack.

The results showed that the participants prefer direct strategies which are transparent and whose functions are easily identified. '*Please*' is a mitigator that is mostly preferred with direct and conventionally indirect strategies, so the results directness strategies and internal modifiers are consistent. Additionally, with the marker '*please,*' it seems that as ESL learners, they might want to minimize the risk of being impolite or misunderstood.

6. *What external modifiers are used by adult ESL learners as mitigating devices in request emails?*

External modifiers, also named supportive moves, include the moves that modify the context in which request appears. As the context of the study is an email, apart from moves such as grounders or apologies, moves such as greetings or closings are also included in external modifiers. External modifiers are used in most of the emails with the most preferred external modifiers being greetings and closings. Despite the higher number of closings, the pre-closing usage is significantly lower than closings. The high frequency of openings and closings indicates that the students are likely to be aware of the effect of using an appropriate email format on politeness. Despite being lower than openings and closings, the requests are also realized through orientation moves, grounders, sweeteners and self-introduction. It appears that the students tended to open

the discourse before making a request and explaining the reason for making their request. The other external modifiers; preparator, obtaining a pre-commitment, imposition minimizer and apology moves, are observed very infrequently in the data.

7. *What forms of request perspective are employed by adult ESL learners in request emails to their teachers?*

Four dimensions of request perspectives were identified: speaker-oriented (*I* perspective), hearer-oriented (*you* perspective), joint (*we* perspective) and the impersonal perspective. The findings show that the requests are mostly structured with a hearer-oriented perspective. The speaker-oriented perspective is also employed by the participants. However, impersonal and joint perspectives were used in only a few instances. The domination of the hearer-perspective shows that the participants mostly focused on the hearer, and in some instances, themselves with the speaker-perspective. While the infrequency of the impersonal perspective may be related to pragmalinguistic skills, the topic of the requests might have caused the rarity of the joint perspective.

8. *To what extent do adult ESL learners use email etiquette in formal emails when sending an email to the faculty?*

It is still difficult to present a full answer to this question due to the limited number of emails in the data and the performing of a partial analysis with regard to the email components. However, it can be said that, overall, there is an awareness of 'netiquette' as the participants mostly used the address forms and email components appropriately. It also should be borne in mind that as making a request is inherently a face-threatening act, it might be more challenging to form a formal email for the student than, for instance, composing a 'thank you' email. Lastly, the insufficient pragmalinguistic and digital skills could impede forming an appropriate formal email process for adult ESL learners.

5.3. Implications for ELT

The findings of the study shed light on the use of the English language by learners in an ESL context from a pragmatic point of view.

Adult ESL learners, with their unique needs, form a large group among English language learners. To notice and understand the request patterns that the learners make can hopefully help them to produce more appropriate requests, thereby easing their lives in the ESL setting in which they live. Language teachers also should know those patterns and help their students to develop their pragmalinguistic and communicative competencies.

Email has turned out to be an important part of life; however, there is still a critical need to learn the basic 'netiquette' rules in the target language. It can be interpreted from the results that adult ESL learners could benefit from learning netiquette and writing appropriate formal emails. The literature shows that email requests are typically teachable and an explicit approach to increasing students' awareness of email pragmatics is particularly essential (Alcón-Soler, 2015; Ford, 2006; Nguyen, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2015; Savvidou & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2019). An inappropriate request email might cause misunderstandings by violating social norms and standards. It is also advocated that explicit email request instruction can help learners achieve their communicative goals and help prevent both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic failures. Therefore, adding a digital literacy component to ESL textbooks and materials, especially with an email component, could be beneficial for ESL learners to minimize any pragmatic failures. However, the addition should not be a superficial and sporadic 'write an email task' but needs to be systematically ingrained into the curriculum as a whole, taking into account the learners future digital communication needs.

Furthermore, most current language assessments consist of four skills of language as well as the use of language components with vocabulary and structure. Integrating digital skills in both the curricula and the assessment might help reinforce developing pragmalinguistic competencies as raising awareness to pragmatic skills helps them connect the linguistic forms, pragmatic roles, and their use in a variety of social contexts as well as the cultural meanings (Kasper, 1997).

Introducing pragmatics into language teaching has been discussed in the literature by many scholars (Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1991; Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008; Kasper & Rose, 2001; McConachy, 2019; Savvidou

& Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2019), however, its effects have not been as visible and persistent as expected. Integrating pragmatics into the ESL curricula, developing materials and assessments that also truly include a pragmatic aspect of language can contribute greatly to language learning.

Finally, more studies on interlanguage pragmatics are needed to develop and add materials and assessments into learning programs. More cross-cultural studies integrated with digital contexts can contribute to providing insights into the new and up and coming needs of ESL learners.

5.4. Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

The study has certain limitations and recommendations for further research.

Firstly, the global COVID-19 pandemic seriously hindered the data collection process. Due to the unexpected and sudden closure of the school in March 2020, the students could not access the computers nor the Internet that the school offered in the building. Most of the students did not have opportunities to send emails to their teachers. Shortly after, cyber threats increased significantly with the global transition to the digital world with the online platforms of the school having received their own share of cyber threats. In March, the email system of the school had two important malware attacks with the latest attack causing the collapse of the email service. The faculty were unable to access their emails for months, which resulted in a loss of all the stored data. During that period, none of the teachers could communicate with the students through their emails, and the school paid for an instant messaging system developed for educational purposes to provide safe communication between the students and the faculty. In the 2020-2021 academic year, the email traffic between the students and the teachers decreased due to the new instant messaging system. Future studies need to be conducted with a larger amount of data to provide more valid generalizable conclusions.

It is important to collect data from several sources in order to examine how various speech acts are realized in a particular culture or in cross-cultural environments (Cohen, 2009). Therefore, this limitation of this study indicates the need for studies

that will follow the data triangulation method, which would provide valuable and accurate representations of productions for speech acts.

Another shortcoming is the lack of sufficient previous studies having been conducted with the adult ESL student profile. The participant profile is unique and has more divergent features than college students, and the requestive emails of that group deserve attention. Because there is an opportunity to work with students of different levels, the developmental continuum in email requests could be observed by comparing the emails of learners at lower and higher language competency levels.

Although the data collection method selected for the study is an advantage in many ways, it is also true that the researcher had limited control over the data collection process. With the effect of the pandemic, the data collected for the study were slightly lower than expected. The number of emails collected for the study is limited because the substantial quantities of data cannot be collected from naturally occurring data as it would through DCT. Another disadvantage of using naturally occurring data is that contextually varied data cannot be generated. Moreover, authentic data is insufficient to compare the imposition of the requests.

The perceptions of the faculty also call for more research. Various factors relating to email formats, language use, request strategies or content may affect politeness. Looking at politeness from the other side by analyzing teachers' evaluations can contribute to acquiring a fuller understanding.

5.5. Final Note

Being an immigrant brings the sense of otherness, feeling like a stranger or an 'alien' in a different country. Apart from all such feelings, immigrants have to face many daily obstacles, such as language barriers and cultural differences (Olsen, 2000). The immigrants I work with have many major hurdles, such as attending their classes, overcoming embarrassment, long working hours, balancing family life, dealing with health problems, and investing in transportation to be able to come to school, to name a few. Their constant effort to learn a language is admirable and praiseworthy. Their unique needs about language learning definitely deserve attention. This thesis hopes

to bring some awareness, encourage further studies and serve immigrant communities around the world.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER

ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

DUMLUPINAR BULVARI 06800
ÇANKAYA ANKARA/TURKEY
T: +90 312 210 22 91
F: +90 312 210 79 59
ueam@metu.edu.tr
www.ueam.metu.edu.tr

Sayı: 28620816 /

21 ARALIK 2020

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Hale Işık GÜLER

Danışmanlığını yaptığınız Nilay Dinç ALTUN'un "***The Development of the Pragmatic Competence of Adult ESL Learners : An Analysis of Email Requests to Faculty*** başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve **384-ODTU-2020** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

Prof.Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY
İAEK Başkanı

B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

GİRİŞ

"*Keleci bilen kişinin yüzünü ağede bir söz*
Sözü pişirip diyenin işini sağede bir söz"

Sufi Şair Yunus Emre (ca. 1308/2006)

Teknolojideki hızlı gelişmelerle birlikte internet dünyadaki pek çok insan için erişilebilir hale gelmiş, kısa bir süre sonra da telefon ve yüz yüze iletişimin alternatifi olmuştur. 21.yüzyılın başından itibaren ise internet kullanıcılarının en sık kullandığı iletişim araçlarından biri e-posta olmuştur (Nie & Erbring, 2002).

Bütün bu hızlı gelişmeler öğretmen ile öğrenci arasındaki iletişim biçimini de etkilemiş, öğretmenler de iletişimdeki en uygun iletişim aracı olan e-postaya geçiş yapmaya başlamışlardır. E-postanın resmi yazışmalar için uygun bir araç haline gelmesi ile de öğrencilerin öğretim görevlilerine gönderdikleri e-posta sayısı da artmıştır (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005; Martin et al., 1999a). Bu geçişin ikinci dil öğrencileri için de önemli etkileri olmuştur. E-posta iletişiminin yüz yüze iletişimde olduğu gibi devamlı dil üretmek zorunda olmanın getirdiği baskıyı azaltması ve iletişimi aksatabilen aksan faktörüne sahip olmaması gibi avantajlara sahiptir (Bloch, 2002). E-posta iletişimi hem sözel hem de yazılı özellikler içermesi nedeniyle hibrit bir söylemdir (Chen, 2006; Maynor, 1994). Bu sebeple e-posta yazarken zamanlama, güç dengesi ve gönderen ile alıcının sosyal statüleri gibi düşünülmesi gereken çeşitli dinamikler mevcuttur. Bu nedenle de özellikle de daha yüksek pozisyonda birine gönderildiğinde e-posta yazma süreci göründüğünden daha zorlayıcı olabilmektedir. Chen'in (2006) belirttiği gibi e-posta ile başarılı bir şekilde iletişim kurabilmek için baskın tarafça konulan uygunluk standartlarına uyma zorunluluğu vardır.

Biesenbach-Lucas'a (2006) göre ikinci dil öğrenenler e-posta yazarken yüz yüze iletişimde yaşadıklarına benzer güçlükler yaşamaktadırlar. Hem yazıda dilbilgisini doğru kullanmaya çalışmak zorunda hissederken hem de kimlik, sosyal ilişkiler ve ideolojiler gibi farklı unsurlara dikkat etmek zorundadırlar. Dahası, uygun bir e-posta

yazmak ikinci dilde edimbilim yetisine sahip olmayı gerektirmektedir. İkinci dil öğrenenlerin dile hakim olması, sosyal normlara ve kültüre de aşina olmaları gerekmektedir. Ancak yapılan çalışmalar, ikinci dil öğrenenlerin genellikle elektronik akademik iletişim için ihtiyaç duyulan edimbilim yetisine sahip olmadıklarını göstermiştir (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, 2018; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996).

İkinci dil öğrenen yetişkinler göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, dijital teknolojiyle sonradan tanışmış olmak da ayrı bir güçlük olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Yetişkinler, özellikle yaşı daha ileri olanlar, hızla ilerleyen teknolojiye yetişmekte geri kalabilmektedirler (Hale et al., 2010; Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008). Dijital okuryazarlığa sahip olmamak, yetişkinlerin interneti veya internet araçlarını kullanmamalarındaki en önemli etkenlerden birisidir (Broady et al., 2010). Bununla birlikte toplumsal farklılıklar da mevcuttur. Bir takım hizmetleri almada yoksun kalmış toplumlar, dijital araçlara dolayısıyla da ilgili becerilere yeteri kadar erişemedikleri için dijital becerilerde geri kalabilmektedirler (Seo et al., 2019). Bu sebeple, teknolojiye, eğitime ya da her ikisine birden az erişimi olan yetişkinler için dijital okuryazarlık programları açılmalıdır (Jaeger et al., 2012; Seo et al., 2017).

İşte tüm bu nedenlerle, ABD'nin başkenti olan Washington DC'de bulunan Carlos Rosario Uluslararası Devlet Okulu, müfredatına dijital okuryazarlık içeriğini de eklemiştir. Okulda eğitim alan öğrencilerin çoğunluğu göçmen olan yetişkinlerdir ve başta ikinci dil olarak İngilizce olmak üzere, ihtiyaç duydukları yaşam becerileri eğitimini almaktadırlar. Toplumla bütünleşebilmeleri için göçmen topluluğunun yeni araçlar öğrenmeleri, yeni beceriler geliştirmeleri ve bunları günlük hayatlarında uygulayabilmeleri gerekmektedir. E-posta da bulundukları ülkede hem resmi hem de gayrı resmi yazışmalarda gündelik iletişimin önemli bir parçası olduğu için, e-posta gönderebilmek ve bu alandaki 'adabımuaşeret' kurallarını bilmek özellikle resmi bağlamdaki yazışmalarda önem arz etmektedir. Her beceri gibi bu becerinin öğrenilmesinde de tekrar önemli olduğu için, öğrencilerin öğretmenlere e-posta göndermesi için gereken ortam sağlanmaktadır.

Dünyada öğrenci ile öğretim görevlilerin arasındaki iletişimin üçte birinden fazlası e-posta yoluyla gerçekleşmektedir (Bippus et al., 2003). Öğrenciler bilgi, yardım ve

dönüt isteme gibi nedenlerle öğretmenlerine e-posta atmayı tercih etmektedirler (Waldeck et al., 2001). Rica e-postaları doğal olarak hem etkileşimsel hem de işlemseldir (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2018). Öğrencinin niyeti her zaman sadece bilgi ya da yardım istemek değil, aynı zamanda öğretmeniyle sosyal iletişim kurmaktır (Yule, 2010). Dili anadil olarak konuşmayanlar için ise e-posta mesajları, sosyal ilişkiyi sürdürme aracı olabilmektedir (Bloch, 2002). Öğretmen ile öğrenci arasında güç mesafesi olduğu için, öğrencilerin öğretmenin pozisyonuna göre doğru edimbilimsel uygunlukta dil kullanmaları ve kibarlık seviyeleri ile yazma biçimlerinde doğru ebimbilimsel ve sosyodilbilimsel öğeleri seçmeleri beklenmektedir (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005, 2007; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996). Bu da, e-posta yazmayı dil öğrencileri için daha da zor hale getirmektedir çünkü hedef dilde edimbilim yetisini de geliştirmelerini gerektirir (Zhu, 2012b). Sonuç olarak, akademik bağlamda bir e-posta yazmak yetişkin bir ikinci dil öğrencisi için kolay bir iş değildir.

1980lerin sonundan itibaren e-postalardaki rica kullanımları pek çok kez incelenmiştir ve bunların önemli bir kısmı öğrencilerin öğretim görevlilerine gönderdikleri e-postalardaki ricalardan oluşmaktadır (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Chen, 2015; Félix-Brasdefer, 2012; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010). Ancak bu çalışmaların büyük kısmında katılımcılar gençlerden veya üniversite öğrencilerinden oluşmaktadır, bu da sonuçların diğer yetişkin öğrencilere genellenmesini sınırlayabilmektedir. Üniversite öğrencileri kendilerine mahsus, diğer yetişkin ikinci dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen öğrencilerden farklı olabilecek özellik ve yetilere sahiptir. ABD Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın verilerine göre, ABD'de, yetişkinlere verilen eğitimin %40'ını ikinci dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen öğrenciler oluşturmakta ve bu öğrencilerin büyük kısmının yaşı 25-44 arasında değişmektedir (Get the Facts on Adult English Language Programs | Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, n.d.). Bu veriler göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, üniversite öğrencilerinin rica ve e-posta kullanımı evrenle tutarlı olamayabilir.

Bu çalışma da ikinci dil öğrenen yetişkin öğrencilerin öğretim görevlilerine yazdıkları rica e-postalarını araştırmaktadır. Analiz iki yönlü yapılacaktır. Öncelikle e-posta içinde oluşturulan ricalar incelenecek, sonra da yapı ve uygunluk açısından e-posta kullanımı tartışılacaktır.

Çalışma, aşağıda belirtilen araştırma sorularına yanıt aramaktadır.

1. Yetişkin dil öğrencilerinin resmi e-postalarındaki konu satırındaki tercihleri nelerdir?
2. Yetişkin dil öğrencileri öğretmenlerine e-posta gönderirken hangi başlangıç ve bitirme formlarını kullanır?
3. Yetişkin dil öğrencileri öğretmenlerine rica e-postası gönderirken hangi hitap biçimlerini kullanır?
4. Yetişkin dil öğrencilerinin e-postalarındaki doğrudanlık seviyesi nedir?
5. Yetişkin dil öğrencileri, rica e-postalarında hafifletici araçlar olarak hangi iç niteleyicileri tercih eder?
6. Yetişkin dil öğrencilerinin rica e-postalarında hafifletici araçlar olarak hangi dış niteleyiciler tercih edilir?
7. Yetişkin dil öğrencilerinin öğretmenlerine gönderdikleri rica e-postalarında hangi rica söylemi açısı görülür?
8. Yetişkin dil öğrencileri öğretim görevlilerine e-posta gönderirken e-postadaki nezaket kurallarını ne ölçüde kullanır?

Bu çalışmanın amacı ikinci dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen yetişkin öğrencilerin, öğretim görevlilerine attıkları rica e-postalarını derinlemesine incelemektir. Bu sayede bu öğrencilerin rica stratejileri ve e-posta kullanımlarını daha iyi anlamamıza yol açacak sonuçlar bulunması amaçlanmaktadır.

ALANYAZIN ÖZETİ

Alanyazın bölümünde öncelikle edimbilimin başlıca çalışmaları ardından da ikinci dil veya yabancı dil alanındaki edimbilim çalışmaları incelenmiştir. Daha sonra sözeylem teorisi ve ricalarla ilgili yapılan çalışmalar özetlenmiş ve çalışmanın ana çerçevesini oluşturan CCSARP projesi anlatılmıştır. Edimbilim araştırmalarında iki farklı veri toplama yöntem olan doğal oluşumlu veri toplama ile söylem tamamlama testi (DCT) kıyaslamalarına yer verilmiştir. Son olarak e-posta söylemindeki çalışmalar ile öğrenci-öğretim görevlisi etkileşimindeki e-posta ricalarını inceleyen araştırmalara özetlenmiştir.

İletişimde bir sözcüğün ya da ifadenin sadece anlamını anlamak yetersiz olacaktır. Dinleyici ya da alıcı konuşanın ya da gönderenin ne demek istediğini de fark etmelidir.

Konuşanın ne demek istediğini veya konuşucu anlamını araştıran bilim edimbilim olarak adlandırılmaktadır (Yule, 2006).

Aradil edimbilimi, Kasper & Dahl (1991) tarafından anadili olmayan bir dili konuşanların sözeylemleri üretmesi ve yorumlaması olarak tanımlanır. Bu alandaki ilk öncü çalışmaları yapan araştırmacılar, sözeylem teorisinin kavramlarını, pek çok dilde ikinci dilde iletişime ket vurabilecek çok kültürlü ve dilbilimsel farklılıkları tanımlayarak deneysel bir şekilde inceleyen çalışmalar yapmışlardır (Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1998; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Thomas, 1983; Weizman, 1989).

Söz, bir anlamı oluşturmak için bir araya gelen ifadeler veya sesler ile kelimeler olarak tanımlanır. Ancak Austin (1962) sözün bir eylemde bulunabileceğini iddia etmiştir. Biri 'Saat 6'da orada olacağım' dediğinde bu konuşmadan daha fazlasıdır, bu ayrıca bir söz vermedir; bu da bir ifade ile söz verme sözeyleminin de gerçekleştiği anlamına gelir (Yule, 2006). Sözeylem kavramı ilk olarak Austin (1962) tarafından söylemin en küçük birimi olarak tanıtılmıştır. Emretme, rica etme veya sorgulama gibi bir amaçla bir şey söyleme anlamına gelir (Austin, 1962). Austin (1962) sözeylemleri üç düzeyde tanımlar: düz sözeylem (the locutionary act), etki sözeylem (the perlocutionary act) ve edimsel eylem (the illocutionary act). Bu çalışmanın da odağı olan rica etme, edimsel eylem (illocutionary act) kategorisi altında sınıflandırılır (Searle, 1969).

1970'lerin sonu ve 1980'lerin başından bu yana evrensel kibarlık kavramı araştırmacılarca tartışılmaktadır. Bu konuya bir açılım getirebilmek için farklı ortamlarda çok kültürlü çalışmalar yürütülmüştür. Bu konuda yapılmış mihenk taşı sayılabilecek çalışma ise bir grup uluslararası araştırmacı tarafından (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) yapılmış ve sonrasından rica ve özürlerin çözümlenmesini inceleyen pek çok araştırmaya ilham kaynağı olmuştur. Projenin amacı farklı dillerdeki özür ve ricaların örüntülerini kıyaslamak ve karşılaştırmaktır. Çok Kültürlü Sözeylem Çözümleme Projesi [The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP)] aradil edimbilimi çalışmaları içerisindeki en kapsamlı deneysel çalışmalardan biri olarak tanımlanabilir. Proje sözeylemleri Kanada Fransızcası, Danca, İngilizce (Amerikan, Avusturalya ve İngiliz), Almanca, İbranice ve Rusça dillerinde incelemiştir. Çalışmada Söylem Tamamlama Testi (DCT) veri toplama aracı

olarak kullanılmıştır. Projenin oluşturduğu çerçevede ricalar; doğrudanlık, rica söylemi açısı ile iç ve dış niteleyiciler bağlamında incelenmiştir. Sonuçlar, kültürel ve durumsal etkenlerin rica stratejileri seçimi üzerinde etkili olabileceğini göstermiştir.

Edimbilim araştırmalarında, Söylem Tamamlama Testinin (DCT) yanı sıra, doğal oluşumlu dil kullanımı da bir veri toplama aracı olarak kullanılmaktadır. Söylem Tamamlama Testleri, konuşma dilinin yazılı formda elde edilebileceği (Sasaki, 1998) ve doğal konuşma içeriğini doğru yansıtabileceği (Beebe & Cummings, 2009) varsayımına dayanır. Çok dilli ve çok kültürlü çalışmalarda doğal sohbetlerden veri toplanmasının zor olacağı inancı nedeniyle edimbilim çalışmalarında sıklıkla tercih edilir (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). Ancak pek çok araştırmacı da dil kullanımının en iyi gerçek konuşmayı analiz ederek çalışabileceğini söyleyerek doğal oluşumlu veriyi savunur (Ogiermann, 2018).

İki yöntemi kıyaslayan çalışmalar da alanyazın kapsamında incelenmiştir (Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2013). Söylem Tamamlama Testlerinin tüm avantajlarına rağmen, insanların gerçek hayat sözeylem kullanımlarının gerçek ve doğru yansıması şüphesiz ki doğal oluşumlu veri toplama yöntemi ile olmaktadır. Bu çalışmada da doğal oluşumlu veri toplama yöntemi tercih edilmiştir.

Her iki yöntemle de öğrencilerin öğretim görevlilerine gönderdikleri e-postalardaki sözeylem kullanımlarını inceleyen çalışmalar yapılmıştır. Hem e-posta dilini (Baron, 2002; Baron, 1998, 2004; Crystal, 2006; Herring, 1996), hem e-postadaki söylemsel yapıları derinlemesine inceleyen (Ho, 2009; Nickerson, 2000; Virtanen & Maricic, 2000) hem de öğrecinlerin öğretim görevlileriyle olan e-posta iletişiminin edimbilimsel yönünü araştıran (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2002, 2006, 2007; Duthler, 2006; Ho, 2010, 2011b, 2011a) çalışmalar yürütülmüştür. Pek çok başka araştırmacı da öğrencişerin iletişim stratejilerin ve öğrenci e-postalarının konularını incelemiştir (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005; Collins, 1998; Malley, 2006; Martin et al., 1999b).

Öğrencilerin öğretim görevlilerine gönderdikleri rica e-postalarını çalışan ilk çalışmalardan biri Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig (1996)'e aittir. Bloch (2002) ise ikinci dil öğrencilerinin öğretmenleri ile kurdukları e-posta etkileşimini incelemiştir. Biesenbach-Lucas (2005, 2007) ise öğretim görevlileri ile öğrencilerin e-posta konuşmalarını incelemiş ve ikinci dil öğrencilerinin öğretim görevlisinden yanıt rica

etme gibi bazı konularda daha az etkili olduğunu ve öğrencilerin doğrudan stratejileri daha çok tercih ettiğini bulmuştur.

Pek çok başka çalışmada dil öğrencileri ile anadili İngilizce olanların ricaları arasındaki farklılıklar araştırılmıştır (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008; Pan, 2010; Hendriks, 2010; Woodfiled & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010; Félix-Brasdefer, 2012, Chen, 2010). Bu araştırmalarda dil öğrencilerinin doğrudan stratejileri daha çok tercih ettiği ancak anadil konuşucularının strateji seçimlerinde daha esnek olabildiğini, öğrencilerin niteleyicileri kullanmama eğiliminin daha fazla, sözcüksel kibarlık göstergelerini kullanma eğilimin ise daha az olduğu gibi bulgular elde edilmiştir. Doğal oluşumlu e-postalar yoluyla yapılan daha yeni bir çalışmada (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2018) ise ikinci dil öğrencilerinin daha doğrudan rica stratejileri ile daha resmi hitap biçimlerini tercih ettiği gözlenmiştir.

Yukarıda ve alanyazında bahsedilen rica e-postalarını inceleyen çalışmalardaki dil öğrencileri katılımcıları genellikle aynı gruptandır. Araştırmacının taramasında üniversite öğrencileri haricinde yetişkin öğrencilerin rica e-postalarına odaklanan bir çalışmaya denk gelinmemiştir. Bu sebeple bu çalışma yeni olarak adlandırılabilir.

YÖNTEM

Tezin yöntem bölümünde çalışmanın yöntemi, araştırmanın tasarımı, katılımcıların profili, veri toplama yöntemi ve veri analizi yöntemi anlatılmıştır.

Çalışma için toplanan veri, Washington DC'de bulunan Carlos Rosario Uluslararası Devlet Okulu'nda orta düzey (B1) dil seviyesinde olan 115 yetişkin dil öğrencisinin öğretmenlerine gönderdiği 145 doğal oluşumlu e-postadan oluşmaktadır. Öğrencilerin yaşı 20-73 arasında değişmektedir. Katılımcıların %67'si kadın, %33'ü erkektir. Katılımcıların büyük yüzde olarak %61'i İspanyolca, %11'i Fransızca, %10'u Amharik konuşurken kalanı 9 farklı dili konuşmaktadırlar. Katılımcılar 26 farklı ülkeden gelmektedirler.

Bu denli heterojen bir grup olmasına karşın, katılımcıların tamamı kendi ülkelerinden ABD'ye yaşamak amaçlı göç etmiş ve İngilizce öğrenmek için çalışan, okuldaki 8 dil seviyesinin 5. basamağı olan B1 seviyesindeki öğrencilerdir. Öğrenciler dil derslerinin yanı sıra temel becerileri edinebildikleri bilgisayar derslerine de katılabilmektedirler.

Çalışmanın verileri bu öğrencilerin öğretmenlere gönderdikleri 145 rica e-postasından oluşmuştur. Doğal oluşumlu veri toplama yönteminin seçilmesinin bir nedeni de gözlemi paradoksundan kaçınmaktır. Veri seçme süreci e-postalar gönderildikten sonra başladığı için, öğrencilerin gönderdikleri e-postalarda araştırmanın bir etkisi bulunmamaktadır. Bu-postalar öğrencilerden talep edilmemiş, aksine öğrenci-öğretmen iletişiminde kendiliğinden ortaya çıkmıştır. Toplanan tüm e-postaların içerisinden rica olanlar ayrıştırıldıktan sonra, veri, kodlama ve analiz etme süreci için MAXQDA2020 yazılım programına aktarılmıştır. E-postalardaki ricaların incelenmesi, ilk olarak Blum-Kulka et. al (1989) tarafından geliştirilmiş olan Çok Kültürlü Sözeylem Çözümleme Projesi [The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP)]'nin uyarlanmış modeli ile yapılmıştır. Uygun bir resmi e-postanın kullanımı isteğe bağlı olanlar da dahil olmak üzere tüm kısımları içermesi ve edimdilbilimsel olarak doğru bir şekilde kullanılması beklenmektedir. Bu nedenle, e-posta kısımları Zhu (2012a)'nun uyarlanmış çerçeve modeli ile incelenmiştir.

SONUÇ

Elde edilen bulguların araştırma soruları ile ilgisi aşağıda sunulmuştur.

1. *Yetişkin dil öğrencilerinin resmi e-postalarındaki konu satırındaki tercihleri nelerdir?*

Hemen hemen her e-postada konu satırının kullanıldığı görülmüştür. Katılımcılar genellikle e-postanın konusu hakkında bir fikir verebilecek bilgilendirici bir konu kullanabilmişlerdir. Ancak, bazı e-postalarda asıl yeri olan gövde kısmı yerine konu satırına tüm mesajın yazıldığı görülmüştür. Konu satırı boş olan e-posta sayısı oldukça azdır; bu da öğrencilerin konu satırına aşina olduklarını ve uygun bir resmi e-postada gerekli bir kısım olduğunu bildiklerini göstermektedir.

2. *Yetişkin dil öğrencileri öğretmenlerine e-posta gönderirken hangi başlangıç ve bitirme formlarını kullanır?*

Bitirme kısmının kullanımı sayı olarak başlangıç kısmından daha az olsa da, katılımcılar çoğunlukla başlangıç ve bitirme formlarını kullanmışlardır. Bu başlangıç ve bitirme formları ise ağırlıklı olarak daha gündelik, resmi olmayan bir dile sahiptir. Başlangıçtaki '*Merhaba*' ve '*Selam*' gibi bazı günlük ifadeler, '*Sayın*' gibi daha resmi olan selamlaşmalardan daha yaygındır. E-postaları bitirirken ise öğrencilerin

neredeyse yarısı '*Teşekkürler*' veya '*Teşekkür ederim*' gibi şükran ifadeleri kullanmıştır. 'Saygılarımla' veya 'Hürmetler' gibi resmi ifadeler ise veride çok sık görülmemiştir. Öğrencilerin bir kısmı sadece ismi ile e-postasını bitirmeyi tercih ederken, e-postaların üçte biri herhangi bir kapanış ifadesi olmadan gönderilmiştir.

3. *Yetişkin dil öğrencileri öğretmenlerine rica e-postası gönderirken hangi hitap biçimlerini kullanır?*

Öğrenciler çoğunlukla öğretmenlerin adları ile birlikte daha gayrı resmi hitap biçimlerine başvurmuşlardır. Unvan ve soyadı gibi resmi hitap biçimleri ise veride seyrek olarak bulunmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, öğrencilerin öğretmenlerine, önüne öğretmenin ismini de koyarak veya tek başına '*hoca*' sözcüğü ile hitap ettiği görülmüştür. Ayrıca öğrencilerin hitap sözcüğünün önünde '*selam*' veya '*merhaba*' gibi selamlamaları da kullandığı bulunmuştur. Bir saygı ifadesi olan '*sayın*' sözcüğünün katılımcıların çoğu tarafından tercih edilmediği görülmüştür ki bu da e-postaların genel gayrı resmi hali ile uyuşmaktadır.

4. *Yetişkin dil öğrencilerinin e-postalarındaki doğrudanlık seviyesi nedir?*

Doğrudanlık seviyesi dört ana grupta incelenmiştir. Bulgular öğrencilerin çoğunlukla daha doğrudan rica stratejilerini kullandığını göstermiştir. Doğrudan stratejinin arasında ise en çok tercih edileni emir/kip olduğu görülmüştür. Öğrenciler ayrıca 'istemek' ve 'ihtiyacı olmak' ifadeleri ile eylemsel stratejileri de tercih etmişlerdir. İkinci en çok kullanılan strateji ise klasik dolaylı stratejilerdir. Katılımcıların yaklaşık üçte biri 'yapar mısınız/yapabilir misiniz' gibi klasik hazırlık sorgusu yöntemlerini kullanmıştır. Başka önemli bir nokta ise öğrencilerin ricada bulunmamayı tercih etmediği e-postaların sayısıdır. E-postaların yaklaşık beşte birinde katılımcılar ricada bulunmamayı tercih etmiştir. Bu sayı, hem tehdit edici sözeylemlerden kaçınma isteği ile hem de öğrencilerin düşük teknoloji becerileri ile açıklanabilir. En az gözlenen strateji ise klasik olmayan dolaylı stratejiler yani ipuçlarıdır. Bu stratejileri kullanarak kibar rica e-postaları göndermek, daha edimdilbilimsel becerileri gerektirdiği için öğrenciler tarafından tercih edilmemiş olması mümkündür.

5. *Yetişkin dil öğrencileri, rica e-postalarında hafifletici araçlar olarak hangi iç niteleyicileri tercih eder?*

İç niteleyiciler sözcüksel, sözdizimsel ve sıfır işaretleme olarak üç kategoride analiz edilmiştir. E-postaların yaklaşık yarısında, sözcüksel iç niteleyiciler kullanılmıştır. E-postaların neredeyse yarısında hiç iç niteleyici kullanılmamıştır. Daha önceki çalışmalarda, dili sonradan öğrenen konuşanların iç niteleyicilerde sıfır işaretlemeyi fazla kullanıldığı görülmüştür, bu da dilbilimsel yeterlik ile ve katılımcıların başa çıkmak zorunda olduğu dijital ortamla açıklanabilir. Sonuçlar ayrıca öğrencilerin sözdizimsel niteleyicilerden kaçınma eğiliminde olduğunu da göstermiştir. Kategorilerin tümüne bakıldığında '*lütfen*' sözcüğünün en belirgin niteleyici olarak bulunmuştur. Katılımcıların '*lütfen*' sözcüğünü çokça kullanması beklenen bir sonuçtur çünkü bir kibarlık işareti olan '*lütfen*', ortak kültürlerarası bir rica hafifleticisidir (Ogiermann, 2009). '*Lütfen*' sözcüğünün sık kullanımı ayrıca ikinci dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen öğrencilerin yanlış anlaşılma veya nezaketsiz olma riskini en aza indirme çabası olarak yorumlanabilir. Sözdizimsel niteleyicilerden ise en çok tercih edilen geçmiş zaman kullanımıdır. Ancak tüm iç niteleyiciler ile kıyaslandığında, ricayı hafifletmek için kullanılan geçmiş zaman hala oldukça az gözlenmiştir.

6. *Yetişkin dil öğrencilerinin rica e-postalarında hafifletici araçlar olarak hangi dış niteleyiciler tercih edilir?*

Dış niteleyiciler ricanın içinde bulunduğu bağlamı niteleyen destekleyici altsözcelerdir. Çalışmanın bağlamı e-posta olduğu için, özür veya zemin hazırlama gibi altsözcelerin yanı sıra başlangıç ve bitirmeler de dış niteleyiciler kapsamındadır. E-posta bitiricilerinin yüksek sayıda gözlenmesine rağmen, bitirme öncesi kullanılan yapılar bitiricilerden önemli ölçüde azdır. Başlangıç ve bitirme yapılarının sık kullanımı öğrencilerin, uygun formatta e-posta yazmanın kibarlık üzerine etkisinin farkında olduğunu göstermektedir.

7. *Yetişkin dil öğrencilerinin öğretmenlerine gönderdikleri rica e-postalarında hangi rica söylemi açısı görülür?*

Rica bakış açıları dört boyutta tanımlanmıştır: konuşmacı yöneltimli (*ben* açısı), dinleyici yöneltimli (*sen* açısı), ortak (*biz* açısı) ve kişidışı açı. Elde edilen sonuçlar ricaların çoğunlukla dinleyici yöneltimli açıdan biçimlendirildiğini göstermiştir.

Veride konuşmacı yöneltimli ricalar da gözlemlenmiştir ancak ortak ve kişidışı açıları sadece birkaç ricada görülmüştür. Dinleyici yöneltimli açının baskın olarak kullanımı katılımcıların dinleyiciye odaklandığını ve bazı durumlarda da konulucu yöneltimi ile kendine odaklandıpını göstermektedir. Kişidışı açının azlığı edimdilbilimsel beceriler ile alakalı olabilirken, ortak açının azlığı ricaların konu başlıklarıyla ilintili olabileceği düşünülmektedir.

8. *Yetişkin dil öğrencileri öğretim görevlilerine e-posta gönderirken e-postadaki nezaket kurallarını ne ölçüde kullanır?*

Verideki e-postaların sınırlı olması ve e-posta kısımlarının incelmesinin kısmi olarak yapılması nedeni ile bu soruya tam bir cevap vermek mümkün olamayacaktır ancak bulguların ışığında genel olarak öğrencilerin e-postlardaki nezaket kurallarının farkında olduğu söylenebilir. Son olarak, ikinci dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen yetişkin öğrenciler için, yetersiz edimdilbilimsel beceriler ile dijital yeterlilikler uygun resmi bir e-posta yazma sürecine ket vurabilmektedir.

DİL ÖĞRETİMİ ALANI İÇİN ÇIKARIMLAR

Kendilerine has ihtiyaçları ve özellikleri ile ikinci dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen yetişkin öğrenciler, İngilizce öğrenenlerin önemli bir bölümünü oluşturan bir gruptur. Onların rica örüntülerini fark etmek ve anlamak, onların daha uygun ricalar kullanmalarına yardımcı olacak ve böylelikle içinde bulundukları İngilizce konuşulan ortamdaki yaşamlarını kolaylaştıracaktır. Dil öğretmenleri de bu örüntüleri bilmeli ve böylece öğrencilerinin edimdilbilimsel ve iletişim yeterliklerini geliştirmelerine yardımcı olabilmelidir.

E-postalar her ne kadar hayatın önemli bir parçası haline geldiyse de hedef dildeki e-posta nezaketi kurallarını bilmek hala bir ihtiyaçtır. Elde edilen sonuçlardan yetişkin dil öğrencilerinin uygun e-posta yazma ve nezaket kurallarının öğretilmesinden fayda görebileceği şeklinde yorumlanabilir. Daha önce yapılan çalışmalar e-posta ricalarının öğretilebilir olduğunu ve e-posta edimbilimine öğrencilerinin farkındalığını artırmak için açıkça yapılacak öğretimin gerekliliğini ortaya koymuştur (Alcón-Soler, 2015; Ford, 2006; Nguyen, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2015; Savvidou & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2019). Uygun olmayan bir rica e-postası, sosyal normları ve standartlara uymadığı için ciddi yanlış anlaşılmalara yol açabilir. Bu nedenle doğrudan ve açıkça

e-posta ricasının öğretimi, öğrencilerin iletişim hedeflerini ulaşmasına yardımcı olurken hem sosyaedimbilimsel hem de edimdlibilimsel hataların önlenmesine yardımcı olabilir. Bu nedenle dil kitaplarına ve öğretim materyallerine dijital içeriğin, özellikle de e-posta içeriğinin eklenmesi edimbilimsel hataların en aza indirilmesinde dil öğrencilerine yardımcı olabilecektir. Ancak bu ekleme, yüzeysel bir ‘e-posta yaz’ çalışmasından ibaret olmamalı, aksine öğrencilerin gelecekteki dijital iletişim ihtiyaçlarını göz önünde bulundurarak sistemli bir şekilde bütün olarak müfredata eklenmelidir.

Son olarak, öğrenim programlarına materyal ve değerlendirme eklenebilmesi için daha fazla aradil edimbilimi üzerine yapılacak çalışmalara ihtiyaç vardır.

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YAZARIN / AUTHOR

Soyadı / Surname : Dinç Altun
Adı / Name : Nilay
Bölümü / Department : İngiliz Dili Öğretimi / English Language Teaching

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