Request Strategies of EFL University Learners at Jambi University

by Nina Setyaningsih

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Raju Kurniawan[1], Yahfenel Evi Fussalam[2], and Mukhlash Abrar[3]

[1]Universitas Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia
[1]kurniawanraju974@gmail.com
[2]Universitas Muhammadiyah Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia
[2]yahfenel88@gmail.com
Universitas Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia
[3]mukhlash.abrar@unja.ac.id

Abstract. Making appropriate requests is a crucial aspect of pragmatic competence in language learning. This research aimed to investigate common request strategies used by EFL University Learners at Jambi University when making requests at the ages of 19, 20, and 21. This research design was an intrinsic case study to gain an in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon within its specific context. Data were collected through a written discourse completion test (DCT) from six participants, two from each age group. They were analyzed using discourse analysis, specifically focusing on the request strategies proposed by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), Blum-Kulka (1987), and Trosborg (1995). The findings reveal that most participants employed conventionally indirect (hearer-based) strategies in the form of ability, willingness, and permission (25 times, 83.3% frequency of semantic formulas) and conventionally indirect request (speaker-based) strategies in the form of desires/needs (3 times, 10% frequency of semantic formulas), followed by direct request strategies in the form of performatives (2 times, 6.6% frequency of semantic formulas). The research concluded that conventionally indirect request strategies (hearer-based) in the form of ability, willingness, and permission are mostly used in making requests among the studied age groups. It also found that age influenced how social power as a social variable maintained smooth social interactions in making requests. Those different age groups exhibited diversities in the use of directness level in making requests based on the age gap between the speaker and the hearer. Additionally, the research indicates how the focus shifts to the hearer's wants as the speaker casts requests in various direct forms. This suggests that people tend to make requests subtly, especially within academic settings. These findings have important implications for language teaching and pragmatics instruction, potentially influencing approaches to improving learner awareness of appropriate request strategies in academic and social contexts.

Keywords: age; EFL; request strategies; university learners

Abstrak. Kemampuan untuk membuat permintaan yang tepat merupakan aspek penting dari kompetensi pragmatis dalam pembelajaran bahasa. Penelitian kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki strategi permintaan yang umum digunakan oleh pembelajar bahasa Inggris di Universitas Jambi ketika membuat permintaan pada usia 19, 20, dan 21 tahun. Desain penelitian ini adalah studi kasus intrinsik untuk mendapatkan pemahaman mendalam tentang fenomena dalam konteks spesifiknya. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes penyelesaian wacana (DCT) dalam bentuk tertulis dari enam peserta, dua orang dari setiap kelompok usia. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis wacana, secara khusus berfokus pada strategi permintaan yang diusulkan oleh Blum-Kulka dan Olshtain (1984), Blum-Kulka (1987), dan Trosborg (1995). Temuan menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar partisipan menggunakan strategi permintaan tidak langsung konvensional (berbasis pendengar) dalam bentuk kemampuan, kemauan, dan izin (25 kali, 83,3% frekuensi formula semantik) dan strategi permintaan tidak langsung konvensional (berbasis pembicara) dalam bentuk keinginan/kebutuhan (3 kali, 10% frekuensi formula semantik), diikuti oleh strategi permintaan langsung dalam bentuk performatif (2 kali, 6,6% frekuensi

formula semantik). Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa strategi permintaan tidak langsung secara konvensional (berbasis pendengar) dalam bentuk kemampuan, kesediaan, dan izin adalah yang paling sering digunakan dalam membuat permintaan di antara kelompok usia yang diteliti. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa usia mempengaruhi bagaimana kekuatan sosial sebagai variabel sosial menjaga kelancaran interaksi sosial dalam membuat permintaan. Kelompok usia yang berbeda tersebut menunjukkan perbedaan dalam penggunaan tingkat keterusterangan dalam mengajukan permintaan berdasarkan perbedaan usia antara pembicara dan pendengar. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bagaimana fokus bergeser ke keinginan pendengar ketika pembicara menyampaikan permintaan dalam berbagai bentuk langsung. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa orang cenderung mengajukan permintaan dengan cara yang halus, terutama dalam lingkungan akademis. Temuan ini memiliki implikasi penting bagi pengajaran bahasa dan pengajaran pragmatik, yang berpotensi memengaruhi pendekatan untuk meningkatkan kesadaran pelajar akan strategi permintaan yang tepat dalam konteks akademis dan sosial. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengetahuan tentang perkembangan pragmatik pada mahasiswa yang sedang belajar bahasa Inggris dan menawarkan wawasan yang dapat diterapkan untuk meningkatkan kompetensi pragmatik mahasiswa di universitas-universitas di Indonesia dan di luar Indonesia.

Kata kunci: *EFL; pembelajar universitas; strategi meminta; usia;*

INTRODUCTION

Human beings all across the world cannot coexist without communication. As a result, humans use language to convey information, attitudes, and opinions, and to express desires, threats, promises, and requests. This emphasizes Austin's (1975) concept of utterances' performative purpose, which Searle (1976) developed in the Speech Act Theory. It necessitates the use of language not only to convey information but also to carry out activities. Austin (1975) classified speech acts into three categories: locutionary acts (the actual meaning of utterance), illocutionary acts (an utterance's intended significance as a socially valid verbal action), and perlocutionary acts (an utterance's effect on the hearer's feelings, thoughts, or actions) (Al-Abbas, 2023).

Requests are a fundamental aspect of communication in society, but they involve asking someone to act, which can potentially affect interpersonal relationships. Since making a request entails asking someone to do something, it can be considered a face-threatening act (FTA) as it imposes the speaker's desire on the hearer and potentially limits the hearer's freedom of action. As a result, to maintain smooth social interactions, speakers must carefully calculate social variables such as social distance between the speaker and the hearer, social power, and the request imposition's ranking to ensure its perlocutionary success (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

The act of requesting indicates asking someone to do something for the speaker. When someone else acts upon a request, it demonstrates the effectiveness of the speech act. A speech act of request is a noticeable occasion in day-to-day interactions, one in which the speaker usually employs appropriate linguistic structures to make demands according to specific circumstances. People produce requests for various reasons in ordinary interactions, either to obtain information or certain actions, to seek support, or to secure help from others. However, the way how requests are presented varies from one speech community to another.

Age is a crucial factor in language use and pragmatic competence. According to Bull (2008), age refers to the span of one's life or existence. Age-grading is a rule that states that all speakers in a

community use more tokens of one type at one age and more tokens of another type at another. Other features of people's speech alter as they get older. Pitch, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar could be employed to distinguish between age groups. Some designs are appropriate for 10-year-olds or teenagers, but they diminish with age (Holmes, 2013). Age is a factor that influences how requests are made to someone else. When someone requests something from a person who is older or a younger person, it influences the politeness strategy employed. Different ages and different strategies show variations in request attitudes. When requesting something from someone older, people tend to be more polite. When requesting something from someone younger, the level of politeness may be lower compared to requests made to older individuals.

Requesting is one of the social acts that plays an important role in communicating messages between humans. Trosborg (1995) defined a request as an illocutionary act in which a speaker (requester) asks a hearer (requestee) to perform an act for the speaker's advantage. It implies that requests force the requester's wishes on the requestee, limiting the former's rights to action, and so are regarded as one of the most face-threatening speaking actions (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), Blum-Kulka (1987), and Trosborg (1995) categorized request strategies as shown in Table 1.

Table 1   Request strategies proposed by Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, (1984), Blum-Kulka (1987) and Trosborg (1995).

Situation: "Speaker requests to borrow Hearer's car".		
	Descriptive Category	Example
Direct Request	Obligation	"You must/have to lend me your car".
	Performatives (hedged)	"I would like to ask you to lend me your car".
	Performatives (unhedged)	"I ask/require you to lend me your car".
	Imperatives	"Lend me your car".
	Elliptical phrases	"Your car (please)".
Conventionally Indirect (Hearer-Based)	Ability	"Could you lend me your car?"
	Willingness	"Would you lend me your car?"
	Permission	"May I borrow your car?"
	Suggestory formulae	"How about lending me your car?"
Conventionally Indirect (Speaker-Based)	Wishes	"I would like to borrow your car".
	Desires/needs	"I want/need to borrow your car".
Non-conventionally Indirect Request	Hints (mild)	"I have to be at the airport in half an hour".
	Hints (strong)	"My car has broken down. Will you be using your car tonight?"

As a result, individuals frequently strive to form requests in a manner that seems appropriate to the listeners by employing politeness methods to turn down the request and reduce the recipient's face loss (Al-Abbas, 2023).

Previous research has shown that age plays a significant role in using the use of request strategies and politeness. Uzun (2013) revealed that politeness strategies in making requests based on direct and indirect requests vary based on participants' age. As participants' age increased, they preferred indirect requests over direct ones, with a higher percentage of indirect requests in older age groups. Rial Montes (2022) found that politeness strategies used by Galician-speaking children aged four to twelve in requests showed a progression in politeness strategy acquisition with age, with some strategies already acquired before the age of 4. The study also found that certain politeness strategies were more prevalent in older age groups, suggesting a developmental trajectory in politeness skills.

Thanh et al. (2022) found that English major learners primarily use indirect request strategies, specifically negative politeness, in their communication with teachers. This indirect approach is used in 66.7% of requests, while positive politeness is used in 33.3%. They highlighted the preference for indirect communication in English major learners and emphasized a nuanced approach to politeness in their interactions.

Al-Abbas (2023) revealed that at six years old, Jordanian children demonstrated politeness in their linguistic abilities, but the attribution of polite statements to appropriate speech acts remained unclear. There were no substantial gender variations in politeness tactics at this age. Around the age of ten, children improved their ability to show politeness in requests, with the most prevalent method being the use of the lexical politeness marker "Please."

Alrabee' et al. (2023) found that Jordanian children use politeness strategies while making requests, with a focus on direct and indirect forms. When it came to polite requests, age played a major role. Nine-year-olds were most likely to use indirect forms, followed by seven-year-olds and then five-year-olds, who preferred direct asks with some sort of semantic softeners.

Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) discovered that native and non-native English-speaking graduate learners used direct and indirect requests in emails to faculty members. Both native speakers and non-native speakers used more direct strategies for lower imposition requests, such as appointments and feedback. The percentage of direct requests was higher for these types, while the indirect requests' percentage was higher for higher imposition requests like extensions.

This study addresses a critical aspect of pragmatic competence in academic communication, emphasizing the importance of appropriate request formulation for effective interaction in educational settings. By examining how students at different ages construct requests, the research aims to inform and enhance teaching methodologies, ultimately improving students' pragmatic skills. Jambi University, as a prominent Indonesian institution, serves as a representative case study for exploring EFL learners' pragmatic development within the country's unique cultural context. This research is particularly valuable as it fills a gap in the existing literature by focusing on the specific interplay between age, cultural norms, and pragmatic competence in an Indonesian EFL environment. Understanding these dynamics can provide valuable insights into the development of language learners' communicative abilities, taking into account both linguistic and cultural factors that shape their request strategies.

Given the importance of request strategies in academic and social interactions, and the limited research on age-based variations in request strategies among Indonesian EFL university students, this study aims to address the following research question: Why do Jambi University EFL Learners use certain request strategies when they make requests at the ages of 19, 20, and 21, and how do these strategies reflect their pragmatic competence and cultural context? By addressing this question, we seek to understand not only what strategies are used but also the underlying reasons for these choices, providing valuable insights into the development of pragmatic competence among EFL learners in Indonesian universities.

METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach, specifically employing an intrinsic case study design. The choice of an intrinsic case study was motivated by the need to gain an in-depth

understanding of the request strategies used by EFL learners at Jambi University within their specific context. This design allows for a detailed exploration of the phenomenon, taking into account the unique characteristics of the participants and their environment (Stake, 1995).

The intrinsic case study approach was particularly well-suited for this research on request strategies among Indonesian EFL university students. Focusing on the specific context of Jambi University allowed the researchers to examine language use while considering the relevant cultural and institutional factors that may have influenced it. The in-depth, detailed analysis of individual cases provided rich data on each participant's use of request strategies. This was an important advantage given the limited prior research on this topic among Indonesian EFL students. Finally, the holistic perspective of the case study approach enabled the researchers to consider a range of factors, including age, social context, and individual differences, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

The researchers conducted a study comparing request strategies across the aforementioned age groups. Throughout the qualitative research process, the researcher continually focused on the participants' issues or problems (Creswell, 2009). The study focused on EFL University Learners from the English Education Study Program at the University of Jambi. Six participants were selected and evenly distributed across three age groups: nineteen, twenty, and twenty-one years old. This limited sample size was chosen to prioritize depth over breadth in the intrinsic case study design, allowing for a more thorough analysis within resource constraints. The approach also considered the potential for data saturation in qualitative research with homogeneous populations, facilitated comparative analysis, and aligned with the study's exploratory nature. All participants fell within the emerging adulthood period, spanning from 18 to 25 years, characterized by experimentation, exploration, and intellectual challenges in academic work (Santrock, 2012). This age range was deemed particularly relevant for examining request strategies, as it represents a critical phase in the development of sophisticated communication skills and navigation of complex social and academic environments.

The study employed a Written Discourse Completion Test (DCT) originally developed and piloted by Dong (2009) to gather data. This DCT comprised five scenarios designed to elicit request strategies in academic settings across different age groups. The researchers chose this method for several key reasons: it ensured consistency in participant responses, minimized spontaneous answers by allowing time for consideration, focused specifically on academic contexts, proved practical for administration and analysis, and enabled potential comparisons with similar studies. The DCT presented participants with five hypothetical situations requiring them to make requests, each varying in terms of social distance, relative power between interlocutors, and the degree of imposition. This approach facilitated a comprehensive examination of how participants adapted their request strategies across diverse social contexts (Dong, 2009; Taguchi, 2018; Landone, 2023).

After collecting the data, the researchers employed discourse analysis to examine the responses, focusing on age and request strategies at the University of Jambi's English department. This analytical method was chosen for its ability to explore language use in context, revealing underlying meanings and social implications of linguistic choices. The analysis process involved several steps: familiarization with the data, initial coding using frameworks from Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), Blum-Kulka (1987), and Trosborg (1995), thematic analysis to identify patterns, comparative analysis across age groups, contextual analysis of situational factors, quantification of strategy frequencies, and interpretation of findings in light of existing theories. Responses were coded based on directness levels and specific strategies used, such as ability, willingness, or permission. This comprehensive

approach allowed researchers to examine how participants constructed requests, considering factors like politeness and linguistic formulations. By combining qualitative analysis with quantitative measures, the study provided insights into both individual language use and broader patterns among Indonesian EFL learners at Jambi University, particularly about age-related differences in request strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research questions, this study was conducted to investigate the rules of request strategies among EFL university learners at Jambi University. This section discusses request strategies proposed by using Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), Blum-Kulka (1987), and Trosborg (1995) models. The findings are presented in terms of the level of directness and specific request strategies used by participants.

Requests Directness Level

The findings on the level of directness in requests were derived from the DCT responses of EFL University Learners at the English department, University of Jambi. The researchers encoded these responses using the models proposed by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), Blum-Kulka (1987), and Trosborg (1995).

Table 2 The general finding of directness levels across situations

No	Name	Age	Situation				
			1	2	3	4	5
1	A	19	CID	CID	CID	CID	CID
2	B	19	CID	CID	CID	CID	CID
3	C	20	CID	CID	CID	CID	CID
4	D	20	CID	D	D	CID	CID
5	E	21	CID	CID	CID	CID	CID
6	F	21	CID	CID	CID	CID	CID

Note: CID = Conventionally Indirect, D = Direct

The data from Table 2 reveals notable patterns in the use of direct and indirect requests across different situations and age groups. In situations where the speaker was younger than the hearer, all participants consistently used conventionally indirect requests, regardless of their age. However, when the speaker was older than the hearer, there was more variation in request strategies, particularly among the 20-year-old group. Interestingly, the 20-year-old group showed the most diversity in strategy use, with one participant employing direct requests in two situations where they were older than the hearer, suggesting a possible transitional phase in pragmatic development. Despite these variations, there was an overall strong preference for conventionally indirect requests across all age groups and situations, indicating a general tendency towards politeness and face-saving strategies among the participants. This pattern held for all 19- and 21-year-olds, as well as most 20-year-olds, in all five situations presented. These findings highlight the complex interplay between age, social dynamics, and pragmatic competence in the use of request strategies among these Indonesian EFL learners. To further quantify these findings, Table 3 presents the frequency and percentage of each directness level across age groups.

Table 3 Frequency of the level of directness

No	Level of Directness	Age	Number	Percentage
1	Direct Request (D)	19	0	0%
		20	2	20%
		21	0	0%
2	Conventionally Indirect Request (CID)	19	10	100%
		20	8	80%
		21	10	100%
3	Non-conventionally Indirect Request (NID)	19	0	0%
		20	0	0%
		21	0	0%

The quantitative findings reveal interesting patterns in request strategies among EFL learners at Jambi University. Both 19-year-old and 21-year-old participants exhibited complete consistency, employing conventionally indirect requests in all instances. In contrast, the 20-year-old group displayed the most variation, with 80% of their requests being conventionally indirect and 20% direct. Interestingly, non-conventionally indirect requests were absent across all age groups and situations. These results suggest a strong overall preference for conventionally indirect requests among EFL learners. However, the data also hints at a possible period of experimentation or transition around age 20, during which some individuals may begin to incorporate more direct strategies in certain contexts.

Request Strategies

Moving beyond the general level of directness, the researchers analyzed the specific request strategies used by participants. Table 4 presents a detailed breakdown of the strategies employed across different situations and age groups.

Table 4 The general finding of each strategy

No	Name	Age	Situation				
			1	2	3	4	5
1	A	19	A	A	A	A	A
2	B	19	WL	A	P	P	P
3	C	20	A	A	A	WL	DN
4	D	20	WL	PH	PU	A	DN
5	E	21	A	P	A	A	DN
6	F	21	A	A	A	A	A

Note: A = Ability, WL = Willingness, P = Permission, PH = Performatives (hedged), PU = Performatives (unhedged), DN = Desires/needs

The analysis of these findings reveals several interesting patterns in request strategies across age groups and situations. The ability strategy emerged as the most frequently used approach across all demographics, particularly among 19- and 21-year-olds. Willingness strategies were employed occasionally by 19- and 20-year-olds, especially when addressing older individuals, but not by 21-year-olds. Permission-based requests were used by both 19- and 21-year-olds in various age

dynamics, while performatives were uniquely utilized by a single 20-year-old participant when addressing younger individuals. The desires/needs strategy appeared exclusively in situations where the speaker was older than the hearer, used by 20-year-olds and one 21-year-old. These findings suggest that the ability strategy is the most versatile, possibly due to its perceived politeness. Age-related variations in strategy use were observed, with willingness strategies decreasing and desires/needs strategies increasing with age. The 20-year-old group demonstrated the most diverse strategy use, potentially indicating a transitional phase in pragmatic development. Additionally, the relative age difference between speaker and hearer appeared to influence strategy choice, with more direct approaches employed when addressing younger individuals. To provide a more comprehensive overview of strategy use, Table 5 presents the frequency and percentage of each strategy across age groups.

Table 5 Frequency of Request Strategy

	Descriptive Category	19-yo	20-yo	21-yo	Number (%)
Direct Request	Obligation (O)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Performatives (hedged) (PH)	0 (0%)	1 (3.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.3%)
	Performatives (unhedged) (PU)	0 (0%)	1 (3.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.3%)
	Imperatives (I)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Elliptical phrases (EP)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Conventionally Indirect (Hearer-Based)	Ability (A)	6 (20%)	4 (13.3%)	8 (26.7 %)	18 (60%)
	Willingness (WL)	1 (3.3%)	2 (6.7%)	0 (0%)	3 (10%)
	Permission (P)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.3%)	4 (13,3%)
	Suggestory formulae (SF)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Conventionally Indirect (Speaker-Based)	Wishes (WH)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Desires/needs (DN)	0 (0%)	2 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)	3 (10%)
Non-conventionally Indirect Request	Hints (mild) (HM)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Hints (strong) (HS)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Total	10 (33.3%)	10 (33.3%)	10 (33.3%)	30 (100%)

The quantitative analysis of request strategies reveals significant patterns in usage and preference. Conventionally indirect (hearer-based) strategies dominated, accounting for 83.3% of all requests, with ability strategies being the most prevalent at 60%. Speaker-based strategies (desires/needs) comprised 10% of requests, while direct requests (performatives) made up 6.6%. Notably, no non-conventionally indirect requests (hints) were observed. Age-related patterns emerged, with 19-year-olds exclusively using hearer-based strategies, 20-year-olds displaying the most diverse strategy use, and 21-year-olds primarily employing ability strategies with some incorporation of permission and desires/needs approaches. These findings align with previous research on request strategy development in EFL learners, who tend to favor indirect strategies. The increased diversity in strategy use among 20-year-olds may indicate a period of pragmatic experimentation, consistent with research suggesting a developmental trajectory in politeness skills. The absence of hints could be attributed to the academic context prioritizing clarity, language proficiency considerations, or cultural norms

voring more direct or conventionally indirect strategies. These results provide valuable insights into the pragmatic development of Indonesian EFL learners in university settings.

The findings of this study align with previous research while offering new insights into EFL learners' pragmatic development in an Indonesian university context. The strong preference for conventionally indirect strategies among Jambi University students echoes UZUN's (2013) and Phan Thi Kim Thanh et al.'s (2022) findings on indirect request preferences. However, our study reveals a more complex pattern of age-related variations, particularly among 20-year-olds, suggesting a non-linear developmental trajectory. This aligns with Rial Montes' (2022) observation of more complex strategies in older children. Participants adjusted their strategies based on social variables, consistent with Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory and Biesenbach-Lucas' (2007) findings on context-based strategy adjustment. The absence of non-conventionally indirect strategies contrasts with studies in other cultural contexts, such as Al-Abbas (2023), possibly reflecting Indonesian cultural norms or the academic setting. The observed developmental pattern suggests a U-shaped learning curve, adding nuance to studies like Alrabee' et al. (2023) that found increasing indirectness with age. The prevalence of ability-based strategies raises questions about EFL instruction's influence on pragmatic competence development, a topic explored by researchers like Taguchi (2018).

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the request strategies used by EFL University Learners at Jambi University when making requests at the ages of 19, 20, and 21. The findings reveal complex patterns of pragmatic development influenced by age, social context, and the nature of the request.

Age-Related Variations in Request Strategies

One of the most striking findings of this study is the variation in request strategies across the three age groups. While all groups showed a general preference for conventionally indirect strategies, there were notable differences:

a. 19-year-olds

This group demonstrated a consistent use of conventionally indirect strategies across all situations, suggesting a cautious approach to making requests.

Excerpt 1 (Situation 1 - Borrowing a camera)

```
1. You are a student. Your best friend has just bought an expensive new camera.
   You are asking your best friend to lend it to you, since you are going to a
   club activity this weekend. You are young than your friend. What would you
   say to your best friend:

   Hey, I was wondering if you could possibly lend me your new camera for this
   weekend? I have a club activity and it would be really helpful. I promise
   I'll take good care of it.
```

This excerpt showcases the typical approach of 19-year-olds, using a conventionally indirect strategy (ability/willingness) combined with a promise to mitigate the imposition.

b. 20-year-olds

This group exhibited the most diversity in strategy use, including instances of more direct requests. This aligns with Bardovi-Harlig's (2013) observation of a potential experimentation phase in pragmatic development.

Excerpt 2 (Situation 3 - Borrowing a dictionary)

```
3. In a class when you are reading a book, you come across an unknown word and
   you see that a classmate sitting next to you has a concise dictionary on
   his desk, so you are asking him if you could borrow it for a second. You
   are older than your friend. What would you say to him:

   Hei, are you using dictionary?
   I am gonna borrow it, if you aren't.
```

This excerpt illustrates a more direct approach sometimes used by 20-year-olds, showing their experimentation with different levels of directness.

c. 21-year-olds

This group showed a return to predominantly conventionally indirect strategies but with more nuanced use of additional politeness markers and explanations.

Excerpt 3 (Situation 2 - Borrowing money)

```
2. You are a student. You are asking your friend to lend you Rp. 15.000,- for
   lunch, since you forgot to bring your wallet and you are very hungry now.
   Your friend is old than you. What would you say to your best friend

   Hi, I hate to bother you, but I've found myself in a bit of an awkward
   situation. I accidentally left my wallet at home, and I'm quite hungry.
   Would it be possible for you to lend me 15,000 Rupiah for lunch? I promise
   I'll pay you back as soon as we return to the dorm. I really appreciate your
   help.
```

This excerpt demonstrates the more elaborate and nuanced approach of 21-year-olds, combining conventionally indirect strategies with politeness markers and explanations.

This pattern suggests a non-linear trajectory of pragmatic development, supporting Kasper and Rose's (2002) notion of a developmental curve in pragmatic competence. The 20-year-old group's increased variability in strategy use could represent a critical phase of pragmatic development where learners are testing the boundaries of appropriate language use in various contexts.

Influence of Social Variables on Request Strategies

The study's findings highlight the learners' developing awareness of how social variables influence appropriate request strategies:

Social Distance

In situations involving close friends, participants across all age groups tended to use more elaborated requests, often including explanations or promises. In contrast, interactions with acquaintances elicited more concise, though still polite, requests.

Excerpt 4 (Situation 4 - Borrowing a disk, close friend)

```
4. You are a student in a computer lab. You reached in your school bag for a
   disk, but you could not find one. You see your friends next to you with
   extra disks. Your friend is young than you. What would you say to your
   friend

   Hey, I seem to have forgotten my disk. Do you have an extra one I could use?
   I'd really appreciate it and I'll make it up to you later.
```

Excerpt 5 (Situation 5 - Asking time from acquaintances)

```
5. In cafeteria when you are having lunch. You need to know what time it is now
   and you see that your friends sitting behind of you have a watch. You have
   only talked occasionally with them. You are old than your friend. What would
   you say to them:

   Excuse me, could you tell me the time, please?
```

These excerpts illustrate how learners adjust their request strategies based on social distance, with more elaborate requests for close friends and more concise ones for acquaintances.

Power Dynamics

The study revealed an interesting pattern in how learners adjusted their strategies based on age differences. When addressing older interlocutors, participants generally used more indirect and elaborate strategies. However, when addressing younger interlocutors, some participants, particularly in the 20 and 21-year-old groups, showed a tendency towards more direct strategies.

Excerpt 6 (Situation 1 - Younger to older, borrowing camera)

```
1. You are a student. Your best friend has just bought an expensive new camera.
   You are asking your best friend to lend it to you, since you are going to a
   club activity this weekend. You are young than your friend. What would you
   say to your best friend:

   Excuse me, I hope I'm not imposing, but I was wondering if there's any
   chance I could borrow your new camera for my club activity this weekend? I
   completely understand if it's not possible, but it would be incredibly
   helpful.
```

Excerpt 7 (Situation 4 - Older to younger, borrowing disk)

```
4. You are a student in a computer lab. You reached in your school bag for a
   disk, but you could not find one. You see your friends next to you with
   extra disks. Your friend is young than you. What would you say to your
   friend

   Hey, I need an extra disk. You've got some, right? Let me use one of yours.
```

These excerpts showcase how power dynamics influence request strategies, with more indirect and elaborate requests when addressing older interlocutors, and potentially more direct requests when addressing younger ones.

Imposition of Request

The nature and perceived imposition of the request also influenced strategy choice. High-stakes requests, such as borrowing an expensive camera or money, elicited more indirect and elaborate strategies across all age groups compared to low-stakes requests like asking for the time.

Excerpt 8 (Situation 2 - High-stakes request, borrowing money)

```
2. You are a student. You are asking your friend to lend you Rp. 15.000,- for
   lunch, since you forgot to bring your wallet and you are very hungry now.
   Your friend is old than you. What would you say to your best friend

   I'm so sorry to ask this, but I've found myself in a bit of a situation. I
   accidentally left my wallet at home, and I'm really hungry. Would it be at
   all possible for you to lend me 15,000 Rupiah for lunch? I promise I'll pay
   you back as soon as we get back to the dorm.

5. In cafeteria when you are having lunch. You need to know what time it is now
   and you see that your friends sitting behind of you have a watch. You have
   only talked occasionally with them. You are old than your friend. What would
   you say to them:

   Excuse me, could you tell me what time it is?
```

These excerpts illustrate how the perceived imposition of the request influences the level of indirectness and elaboration in the request strategies.

These findings align with Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory and Economidou-Kogetsidis' (2010) work on the influence of situational variables on request behavior. They suggest that EFL learners at Jambi University are developing sensitivity to these social variables, albeit to varying degrees across age groups.

Cultural Influences on Pragmatic Choices

The consistent preference for conventionally indirect strategies, even in low-stakes situations or when addressing younger interlocutors, may reflect Indonesian cultural norms emphasizing politeness and social harmony. This aligns with Scollon and Scollon's (2001) observations on the influence of cultural values on pragmatic choices.

Excerpt 9 (Situation 5 - Low-stakes request to younger acquaintance)

```
5. In cafeteria when you are having lunch. You need to know what time it is now
   and you see that your friends sitting behind of you have a watch. You have
   only talked occasionally with them. You are old than your friend. What would
   you say to them:

   Excuse me, I hope I'm not disturbing you, but would you mind telling me the
   time? I seem to have forgotten my watch today.
```

This excerpt demonstrates how even in a low-stakes situation with a younger acquaintance, there's a tendency towards indirectness and politeness, possibly reflecting Indonesian cultural norms.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided valuable insights into the pragmatic development of EFL learners at Jambi University, specifically in their use request strategies. By examining how age and social context influence these strategies, we've contributed to a more nuanced understanding of pragmatic competence development in EFL contexts.

The findings highlight the complex nature of pragmatic development, suggesting that it is not a linear process but one that involves periods of experimentation and refinement. The preference for conventionally indirect strategies among our participants indicates a developing awareness of politeness norms in English, but the limited range of strategies used points to areas where EFL instruction could be enhanced.

A multifaceted approach is essential to fully support the development of pragmatic competence in EFL learners. This comprehensive strategy should encompass several key elements: integrating explicit pragmatic instruction throughout the EFL curriculum; utilizing authentic materials and providing real-world practice opportunities; incorporating technology to offer diverse learning experiences; considering cross-linguistic influences and cultural factors that may impact pragmatic development; and conducting ongoing research to deepen our understanding of how pragmatic competence evolves. By implementing these varied approaches, educators can create a more holistic and effective learning environment that fosters robust pragmatic skills in EFL learners, preparing them for the complex communicative demands of real-world interactions in English.

Moreover, as English continues to serve as a global lingua franca, the ability to navigate diverse pragmatic norms becomes increasingly important. Our research not only contributes to the field of EFL education but also broader discussions about intercultural communication and global citizenship.

In conclusion, this study represents a step towards a more comprehensive understanding of pragmatic development in EFL contexts. It underscores the importance of considering pragmatic competence as a crucial component of overall language proficiency, one that requires dedicated attention in both research and pedagogy. As we continue to explore this rich area of study, we move closer to developing truly effective approaches to language education that prepare learners for the complex communicative demands of our interconnected world.

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