

## Preschoolers' Use of Requests

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**ABSTRACT:** Request situations are of great value to observe multiple variables such as power, distance and imposition of the request on the hearer to get the desired object or action. This study investigates requests of Turkish monolingual preschoolers in terms of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) categories. The aim is to find out the structures of head act and adjunct(s), the directness level of the strategy types and perspectives of the speakers (hearer oriented, speaker oriented, hearer and speaker oriented, and impersonal) used in requests. Data was gathered from 24 Turkish speaking children aged between 4;5 and 5;6, 13 of whom were girls and 11 were boys. To collect data, four situations were created considering power and level of imposition of the requests, namely Low Power-Low Imposition, Low Power-High Imposition, High Power-Low Imposition, and High Power-High Imposition. The results show that 1) children use head acts most frequently in their requests, 2) children mainly use direct requests, 3) children prefer to use the speaker oriented perspective more than the other request perspectives. A non-verbal category is added to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) original request categories, which is observed to be peculiar to children. The results are interpreted cautiously since they display varieties for each situation due to the nature of the activities used to collect data.

**Key words:** Requests, power, imposition, directness, hearer oriented perspective, speaker oriented perspective

### Okul Öncesi Çocukların Rica Kullanımı

**ÖZ:** Rica durumları güç, yakınlık, istenen nesnenin veya işin dinleyiciye getireceği olası yük gibi çeşitli değişkenleri gözlemlemek açısından önemlidir. Bu çalışma, Blum-Kulka ve Olshtain'ın (1984) gruplarına göre anadili Türkçe olan tek dilli anaokulu çocuklarının rica yapılarını incelemiş; ricalardaki ana eylem ve eklem yapıları, strateji türlerinin açıklık dereceleri ve konuşmacıların yaklaşımlarını (konuşan odaklı, dinleyici odaklı, konuşan ve dinleyici odaklı ve kişisiz yaklaşım) ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamıştır. Veri, yaşları 4;5 ile 5;6 arasında değişen 13 kız, 11 erkek toplam 24 Türkçe konuşan çocuktan toplanmıştır. Veri toplamak için güç ve değer ilişkisi düşünülerek dört durum oluşturulmuştur. Bunlar, Düşük Güç-Düşük Değer, Düşük Güç-Yüksek Değer, Yüksek Güç-Düşük Değer ve Yüksek Güç-Yüksek Değer'dir. Sonuçlar 1) çocukların ana eylem kullanımlarının çok sık

olduđunu, 2) birok durumda ocukların dolaysız rica yapılarını kullandıklarını, 3) ocukların konuşan odaklı yaklaşımı diđerlerinden daha ok kullandıklarını göstermiştir. Blum-Kulka ve Olshtain'ın (1984) gruplarına ek olarak, ocuklara özgü olduđu gözlemlenen 'sözsüz iletişim' grubu eklenmiştir. Bununla birlikte, etkinliklerin doğasından kaynaklanan çeşitlilikler sonuçların yorumlanmasında etkili olmuştur.

*Anahtar sözcükler:* Rica, güç, yük değeri, dolaysızlık, konuşan odaklı yaklaşım, dinleyici odaklı yaklaşım

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## 1 Introduction

Conversation is held through various speech acts which are defined as “doing things by words”, including asking, thanking, apologizing, ordering, promising, requesting, warning, threatening, etc. (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Among these speech acts, requests, which constitute the focus of this study, occur frequently between at least two or more people and have illocutionary force. Since, by nature, requests are face threatening acts, speakers care for preserving face, which is one's sense of linguistic and social identity. Therefore, speakers make use of various strategies for lessening the threat to face (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

As an important ingredient of politeness theory, the concept of face includes both a desire to preserve the ability to act independently and autonomously, unimpeded by others (negative face), as well as a need to receive approval and support for one's personal sense of well-being (positive face). Although Brown and Levinson (1987) state that an individual brings “self” prior to the interaction and it is stable during the interaction, Goffman (1967) defines face as the image defined and constructed during the interaction. As Goffman suggests, requests generate a great opportunity to see the difference in production, as individuals need to keep multiple factors in mind such as power, distance, and imposition of the request on the hearer so as to reach the desired object or action. Additionally, there might be differences among cultures in the realization of such considerations. For example, in their project titled Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) investigate the cultural and language specific variation in request and apology acts in eight cultures and languages. They assume that every society has a means of realizing politeness, yet there are cultural notions that interfere in determining the distinctive features of politeness and affect the social understanding of politeness across societies. Speakers of certain languages prefer to use speech acts in different ways. For example, requests and apologies are used more directly in Hebrew and Russian (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984), just as requests and complaints in German (House and Kasper, 1981), and requests in Japanese (Fukushima, 1996).

Another study on the cultural differences in the use of requests is a comparison of German and Turkish speakers. Turkish speakers express requests more directly than German speakers (Martı, 2006) and also more than the Dutch speakers do (Huls, 1989). However, since the participants of the study in Huls (1989) are immigrants living in the Dutch culture, their use of direct strategies may or may not be reflecting Turkish culture.

Discussing the notion of ‘face’ in Turkish, Bayraktaroğlu (2000) suggests that since the Turkish society tends to favor close relationships over distance, negative face seems to be inappropriate. Therefore, creating commonality and warmth in communication is valued in Turkish culture (Ruhi and Işık-Güler, 2007).

Long before children become fully competent in production of language, they become aware of appropriateness of language use in their social environment. Since children are highly dependent on their caregivers for fulfilling their physical and psychological needs from their first birthday on, requests and their gradual development starting from reflexive vocalizations to full adult forms are of great interest in the development of children’s speech acts. For example, Ervin-Tripp (1977) analyzes the verbal requests in early second year as the combinations of gestures with names of desired objects and words such as *more*, *want*, *gimme*, and at the age of three onwards, children start to use more elaborate forms such as embedded imperatives (*Would you push this?*). Similarly, Newcombe and Zaslow (1981) suggest that children start to use indirect forms such as question directives and hints as early as two and a half years of age.

Moreover, McTear (1985) states that, unlike adults, children form more direct requests when the imposition gets higher for both the requester and the requestee. Camras, Pisto, and Brown (1985) show that the style of the requests children address to angry speakers is significantly less polite than the requests addressed to happy or neutral speakers. This suggests that children are able to understand the relationship between request style and the affective relationship between participants, which provides evidence of a direct link between request style and broader aspects of social interaction. This shows that at different levels of social situations, children might vary their requests to mark the different aspects of linguistic politeness in their interactions. Parallel to this, Pedlow, Wales and Sanson (2001) find out that there is no significant effect for the power relationship between the speaker and the intended hearer on request type. However, they reveal that there is a significant effect of social distance on request form in the reverse direction, that is, “children used more indirect forms more frequently to more familiar others” (Pedlow et al., 2001: 39). Their results also show that there is a significant effect of the degree of imposition of the request on the other.

There are few studies dealing with acquisition and use of requests by Turkish children. Bahtiyar and Kuntay (2009) study the production of referential utterances of preschoolers and adults in terms of sensitivity to the commonality of their partner's perspective with their own. They find that when children are not prompted to use polite request forms, they do not produce them in their requests; instead, they just label the desired object without differentiating adjectives. The comparative study done by Zingir-Gülten (2008) explores the comprehension and production of requests of Turkish secondary school students in L1 and EFL context. She reports that in L2, students use conventional indirect strategies more frequently than direct strategies. Contrary to this, she states that Turkish children use more direct strategies in their L1.

As children become competent in language use during preschool years, their use of speech acts starts to gain importance. By age four, they start adapting their utterances according to the features of the listeners, such as age, status, and gender (Shatz and Gelman, 1973; Clark, 2003). Given that the literature on Turkish children's requests is limited, the current study aims to provide an understanding of request structures in Turkish at preschool years. In this study, requests of Turkish monolingual preschoolers aged between 4;5 and 5;6 are investigated in terms of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) categories used for requests (see Section 2.2). The aim of the study is twofold: Firstly, to identify the head act structures, strategy types as well as perspectives of the speakers used in requests; and secondly, to reveal if children are sensitive to the properties of adult speech, such as power and imposition on the hearer. Thus this study focuses on the following research questions:

1. What are the head act structures used in requests by Turkish speaking children aged 4;5 and 5;6?
2. What strategy types are used by children in requests?
3. Which request perspectives do children prefer in their requests?
4. Are children sensitive to power and imposition variables in their requests?

## **2 Methodology**

This section introduces the participants, the framework of the analysis, the data collection procedure and the data analysis of this study.

### *2.1 Participants*

The data was obtained from 24 monolingual children (13 girls and 11 boys) who were in the same class at a preschool at a university campus. They were

between the ages of 4;5 and 5;6 (mean age 5;2). They were all from the families who were faculty members or staff at the university campus.

## 2.2 The Framework of Analysis

In their pioneering research, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) shed light on the structure of requests. The analysis of the present data is based on Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) project, CCSARP. In their study, requests are defined as having three units; address term(s), the head act and adjunct(s) to the head act. Address terms are defined as all sorts of expressions used for getting attention of the requestee. The head act is the actual speech act where the request takes place. There might also be adjunct(s) before or after the head act, which is used for many purposes such as explanation, clarification or justification of the request. However, the head act does not necessarily consist of a request question or a statement (1a), sometimes it might be performed through an adjunct (1b).

- (1) a. A: Would you mind cleaning up the kitchen? You left it in a mess last night.  
 B: Ok! I'll clean it up.  
 b. A: You left the kitchen in such a mess last night.  
 B: Ok! I'll clean it up. (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984: 200)

According to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), the head act is performed in different levels of directness. The first one is the most direct level which is explicit and includes imperatives or utterances that name the request directly (*Give me that!*). The other is the conventionally indirect strategy where the request is performed more indirectly and suggests less imposition (*Could you...?*, *Would you...?*). In the nonconventionally indirect level, the speaker relies either on the contextual cues (hints) or gives minimum reference to the desired object or the act such as *It's cold in here* to imply that the other(s) close the window or turn the heater on.

Blum Kulka and Olshtain (1984) also consider the point of view of the requester as it also implies the directness level of the request and has an effect on the performance of the operation. Thus, basically, there are three main elements of the perspective: hearer oriented requests, in which the speaker requests in the perspective of the requestee by using *you* utterances (*Could you...?*); speaker oriented requests, in which the requester has his/her own perspective by using *I* utterances (*Can I...?*); the speaker and hearer oriented perspective, in which the requester uses *we* language so as to share the burden of the request with the requestee (*Could we...?*); lastly, the impersonal perspective in which there is no emphasis on any of the speakers present, so the

agents are neutral or third parties such as *people* or *they* (*Would it be possible...?*).

### 2.3 Data Collection

This study was carried out within the framework suggested in the seminal work of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) with some modifications and additions as required by the data. These modifications are as follows: (1) when exploring the structures of head acts, the head acts and the position of the adjuncts were investigated excluding address terms, (2) while the instrument used in Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's study was a discourse completion test (DCT) where participants were provided with imaginary situations and were asked to complete dialogues and provide the aimed speech act (request or apology), the data in this study was collected orally where controlled and pre-planned real situations were designed. This is because the participants were preschool children who would not be able to process and empathize the imaginary situations, and complete a written test.

Before collecting the data for the study, the researchers made initial classroom observations for two purposes. Firstly, these observations helped them to get an insight about the classroom routines when preparing the request situations. Secondly, during these observations, children got accustomed to the researchers and that increased the familiarity, which led them to act naturally during the data collection procedure. In this way, the data was expected to be natural. Thus, four common *situations* (a term used interchangeably with *case*) that were likely to be experienced by the children were created keeping in mind the factors of the power relation and the level of imposition of the request. These situations are given below in the order that the data was collected:

#### *Situation 1: Low Power-Low Imposition*

Children were grouped in two and asked to connect the pieces of a puzzle together. An equal number of puzzle pieces was placed near each child and each child was expected to ask for the piece that did not exist among his/her pieces.

#### *Situation 2: Low Power-High Imposition*

Children were grouped into three and the researchers asked them a riddle. The winner got a colored play dough with a figure on top of its box. The other children were given the usual white play dough that they were already familiar with. All the children were allowed to play with their own dough for a while, after which they were expected to ask the winner to let them play with his/her play dough. At the end of the activity, the play dough was given to the class as a present.

*Situation 3: High Power-Low Imposition*

In the classroom, researchers were responsible for distributing water from a bottle. One of the researchers had a water bottle and plastic glasses and stood by the table where snack was served. Children asked the researchers to give them a glass of water after they had dessert and fruits as a part of their daily routine.

*Situation 4: High Power-High Imposition*

The children were painting in groups of four around small tables as a part of their daily activity in their class. During this activity, both researchers sat around each table in turn, looking through a kaleidoscope and talking to each other about how interesting the shapes inside the kaleidoscope were. Children were expected to ask for permission to look through the kaleidoscope.

So as to become familiar with the children, the researchers spent a day together with the participants during their activities before the data collection period. Later, the data for each request situation was collected on different days, which took approximately 10 minutes for each group of children except for the High Power-Low Imposition situation which took around 30 minutes in total as it was the snack time for the whole class and they were expected to ask for water individually; therefore, time was not set when collecting the data for this situation. For two of the situations, i.e., the High Power-High Imposition (HP-HI) and High Power-Low Imposition (HP-LI) situations, children were recorded in their own classroom; for the other two situations, i.e. Low Power-High Imposition (LP-HI) and Low Power-Low Imposition (LP-LI) ones, children were taken to another room in small groups inside the preschool.

All the utterances including the requests were noted down by one of the researchers while the other one was in interaction with the participants. Only in the Low Power-Low Imposition case, where two children were connecting the pieces of a puzzle, both of the researchers pretended as if they were studying, but they were both noting down the requests. After collecting the data, the researchers coded those utterances individually. Any discrepancies were discussed by the researchers, and corrections were agreed upon.

#### 2.4 Data Analysis

For each situation, verbal and nonverbal requests produced by children were counted. The frequencies are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Distribution of Utterances Across Situations

Situations	N of participants	N of utterances
LP-LI	20	79
LP-HI	22	114
HP-LI	23	30
HP- HI	16	51

As it can be observed in Table 1, for each case, there were some children who did not produce any verbal and nonverbal requests. We will return to these issues in Sections 3.1 and 3.2 below.

The first step of the analysis of the data was to mark the structures of head act. In the second step, the data was ranked according to different levels of directness. Lastly, request perspectives were analyzed.

### 3 Results

In this section, in line with our aims of the research, the findings regarding the structures of the request, levels of directness and request perspectives are described respectively.

#### 3.1 Head Acts, Adjunct(s) and Nonverbal Requests

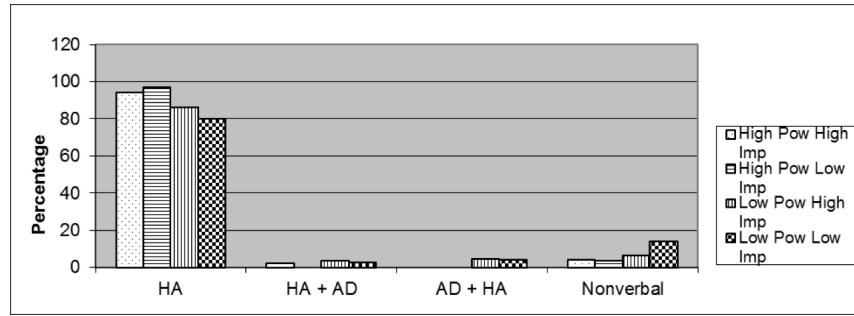
The utterances in requests contain segments as the head act (HA) and adjunct(s) (AD). This section reports our results about the existence of the head act and adjunct(s) and their positions in the utterance.

The head act may appear alone in a question or a statement form, such as, *Bunu alabilir miyim?* ('Can I take this?') or *Onu bana ver* ('Give it to me'). The head act is accompanied by an adjunct in two structures, namely in structure 1, after the head act (HA+AD), as in *Bir şeyler yiyelim mi? Çok acıktım* ('Shall we eat something, I'm very hungry'), or in structure 2, before the head act (AD+HA), as in *Burası çok sıcak, pencereyi açar mısın?* ('It's very hot in here, could you open the window?'). As the core of the speech act, the HA performs the request, while the adjunct is considered to function as strengthening or supporting an act. Adjunct(s) may sometimes serve as head act depending on the situation. For instance, *You left the kitchen in a mess last night* may serve as the head act even though it does not contain an explicitly stated request (See example 1b). However, it is considered as an adjunct if it is followed by an explicit request as in example (1a) *Would you mind cleaning up the kitchen? You left it in a mess last night* (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984:200). In addition to these three categories adopted from Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, the nonverbal category is another category we have observed in



children's requests. In this category, participants perform the request either by pointing to the item they ask for or by just grabbing it. In Figure 1, the percentages of the head act and adjunct(s) are presented according to the four situations.

Figure 1. The head act, adjunct(s), and nonverbal requests



As it can be seen in Figure 1, the use of head act in the High Power-Low Imposition case is the highest (96%). For example, a child asking for water from the researcher chooses to use the following expression:

- (2) Su verir misin? (HP-LI, 5;0)  
*Can you give me water?*

The next high use of head act is observed in the case of High Power-High Imposition (94%). A child who wants to look through the kaleidoscope says:

- (3) Ben de bakmak istiyorum. (HP-HI, 4;7)  
*I want to look through it, too.*

These two cases are followed by the Low Power-High Imposition case (86%) when children were asking for the colored play dough from their friend, and the Low Power-Low Imposition case (80%) when they were asking for the puzzle piece from a friend. The examples are as follows:

- (4) Ben de yapabilir miyim? (LP-HI, 4;6)  
*Can I also do it?*  
(5) Ben bunu alacağım şimdi. (LP-LI, 4;10)  
*I will take this now.*

As to the use of the head act and adjunct(s) (structure 1), the percentages are quite low. For example, the use of this structure in the Low Power-High

Imposition (4%) is followed by the Low Power-Low Imposition (3%) and High Power-High Imposition (2%) cases. There is no example of this structure in the High Power-Low Imposition case. The examples for the use of head act and adjunct(s) are given below:

- (6) Ben kırmızılardan yapsam mı? *Yumuşak*. (LP-HI, 4;9)  
*Shall I do the red ones? Soft.*
- (7) Liva şunu yapar mısın? *Yapamadım*. (LP-LI, 5;0)  
*Liva, can you do that? I couldn't.*
- (8) Bakim. *Kırmızı hani?* (HP-HI, 5;1)  
*Let me see. Where is the red?*

Similarly, utterances with adjunct(s) and head act (structure 2) are also few. The use of this structure in the Low Power-High Imposition case (4.5%) is very close to that in the Low Power-Low Imposition case (4%). In the High Power-High Imposition and High Power-Low Imposition cases, there is no utterance in this category. The examples are as follows:

- (9) *Çok yumuşak ya. Keşke benim olsaymış.* (LP-HI, 4;5)  
*It is very soft. I wish I had it.*
- (10) *Sen yapamıyorsun. Ben bulacam.* (LP-LI, 4;7)  
*You can't do it. I will find it.*

The most frequent use of the nonverbal category is observed in the Low Power-Low Imposition situation (14%), as in example (11). This category occurs less in the remaining cases: 6% in the Low Power-High Imposition case, 4% in the High Power-High Imposition case and 3% in the High Power-Low Imposition case.

- (11) Grabbing the piece of the puzzle. (LP-LI; nonverbal, 4;6)

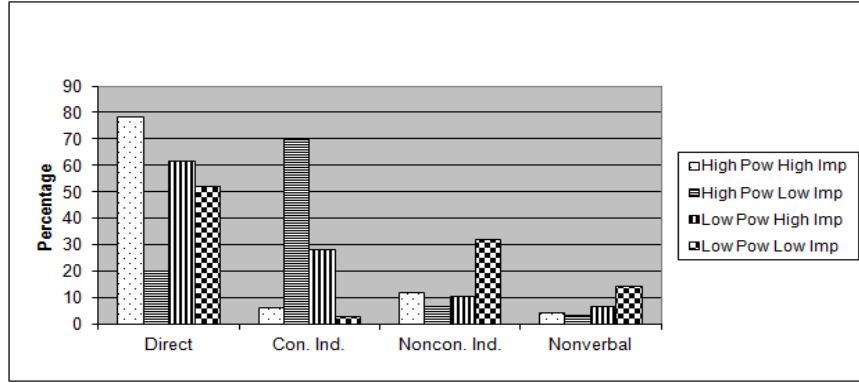
In the high power situations, nonverbal requests are used in low frequency regardless of the imposition. As to the low power situations, low imposition results in an increased use of nonverbal requests compared to the situation where the imposition is high.

The overall results show that regardless of being in a high or low imposition situation, the children use the head act most frequently in their requests. Apart from the rare usages of the head act and adjunct(s) (structure 1 and 2), nonverbal requests are also observed in the data.

### 3.2 Strategy Types of Head Acts

According to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), there are three major levels of directness: (1) the direct level, (2) the conventionally indirect level and (3) nonconventionally indirect level. The direct level includes imperatives; the conventionally indirect level is ritual and conventionalized language use, like *Could you ....?* in English, and *-Ar mlsIn?* in Turkish; and the nonconventionally indirect level is realized through hints, i.e. *It is cold*. Since nonverbal requests are the most direct way of expressing a request, the nonverbal category is introduced as a fourth category. In Figure 2, the percentages of the use of requests according to these four levels are presented.

Figure 2. Strategy types of head acts



As seen in Figure 2, children use various request strategies in each situation. In the High Power-High Imposition case, where children asked to use the kaleidoscope, the use of direct requests is the most frequent one (78%). The other three strategies are used far less frequently: The nonconventionally indirect strategy occurs at a frequency of 12%, the conventional indirect strategy occurs at 6% and the nonverbal strategy at 4%. The children ask for the kaleidoscope using different strategies as in examples given below (12-15):

- (12) Ben de bakıcam. (direct level, 5;1)  
*I will also look at it.*
- (13) Bakabilir miyim? (conventionally indirect level, 5;0)  
*May I have a look?*
- (14) Ahsen çevirmiyor. (nonconventionally indirect level, 4;7)  
*Ahsen is not turning.*  
(Complaining about her friend's not using the kaleidoscope properly, and asking to use the kaleidoscope herself)

(15) Grabbing the kaleidoscope. (nonverbal, 4;10)

In the High Power-Low Imposition case, when the children asked for some water from the researchers, the conventionally indirect strategy is used most frequently (70%), which is followed by the direct strategy (20%). The nonconventionally indirect strategy (7%) and the nonverbal strategy (3%) occur at lesser frequencies, as in the examples (16 to 19) below:

(16) Su verir misin? (conventionally indirect level, 4;7)

*Can you give me some water?*

(17) Su. (HP-LI; direct level, 5;6)

*Water.*

(18) Öğretmenim bana su vermediler. (nonconventionally indirect, 4;10)

*Teacher, they did not give me any water.*

(19) Stands by the researcher and looks at the water. (nonverbal, 4;5)

In the Low Power-High Imposition case, where the children were expected to ask for the colored dough from their friends, the direct strategy is the most commonly used request (58%). This is followed by the conventionally indirect strategy (26%), then the nonconventionally indirect strategy (10%), and lastly the nonverbal strategy (6%) (see examples 20 to 23, respectively).

(20) Ben bundan istiyorum. (direct level, 5;2)

*I want from this one.*

(21) Deneyebilir miyim? (conventionally indirect level, 5;4)

*Can I try?*

(22) Bu çok güzel. (nonconventionally indirect level, 4;5)

*This is very nice.*

(23) Touches the dough. (nonverbal, 4;5)

In the Low Power-Low Imposition case, where children were connecting the puzzle pieces with a friend, the most frequent request strategy is the direct strategy (52%). It is followed by the nonconventionally indirect strategy (32%), and the nonverbal strategy (14%). The conventionally indirect strategy is used much less frequently (2%). The followings are examples (24 to 27) used in different directness levels for this case.

(24) Ben yaparım. (direct level, 4;10)

*I will do it.*

(25) Onun yeri burası. (nonconventionally indirect, 4;11)

*It belongs here.*

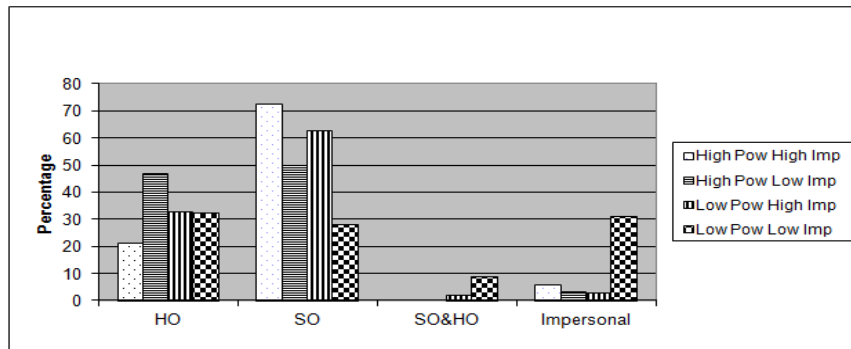
- (26) Onu alabilir miyim? (conventionally indirect level, 5;0)  
*Can I get it?*
- (27) Grabs the puzzle piece. (nonverbal, 5;2)

In sum, when the power is low, regardless of the imposition, the children use more direct strategies. Besides, when the power and the imposition are low, they use more nonconventionally indirect and nonverbal strategies. Regarding high power cases, the children, unexpectedly, use more direct strategies when the imposition is high; whereas they use more conventionally indirect strategies when the imposition is low.

### 3.3 Request Perspectives

As stated by Blum-Kulka and Olshain (1984), requests include three elements: the requester ('I' the speaker), the requestee ('you' the hearer) and the action. They suggest that the perspective that the speaker wants to take is shaped by the choice of the speaker, which is called the request perspective. It has four categories, which are: (1) hearer oriented (HO), (2) speaker oriented (SO), (3) speaker and hearer oriented (SO&HO), and (4) impersonal (IMP) (see Section 2.2). In Figure 3, the percentages of the request perspectives taken by the children are shown.

Figure 3. Request perspectives



As illustrated in Figure 3, the use of the hearer oriented perspective, the speaker oriented perspective, and the impersonal perspective are observed in all of the situations. In the High Power-High Imposition case, where the children asked for the kaleidoscope from the researchers, the speaker oriented perspective is highly used (72%). The hearer oriented (22%) and the impersonal (6%) categories follow it, but there is no use of the speaker and hearer oriented

(henceforth SO&HO) perspectives in the data. The following examples (28 to 30) show different perspectives for this case:

- (28) Bi de ben bakayım. (SO, 4;7)  
*Let me have a look, too.*
- (29) (28) Sonra bana ver Ahmet. (HO, 4;9)  
*Later give it to me Ahmet.*
- (30) (29) Çok güzel resimler var. (IMP, 4;9)  
*There are very beautiful pictures.*

When the children were asking for water from the researchers in the High Power-Low Imposition case, the use of the speaker oriented perspective and the hearer oriented perspective is observed to be very close, 50 % and 47 %, respectively. The impersonal category is used at a small proportion, which is 3%. However, there is no request strategy used in the SO&HO perspective in this situation. Examples for different perspectives used in this situation can be found below (31 to 33):

- (31) Su alabilir miyim? (SO, 4;6)  
*Can I get some water?*
- (32) Öğretmenim su verir misin? (HO, 5;3)  
*Teacher, can you give me some water?*
- (33) Öğretmenim bana su vermediler. (IMP, 4;10)  
*Teacher, they didn't give me any water.*

In the Low Power-High Imposition case, when children were playing with the colored dough, the speaker oriented perspective is the most frequently used one among the other categories (62%), while the hearer oriented perspective is almost half of it (33%). The impersonal and SO&HO perspectives are found only a few times (3% and 2% respectively) in this situation. The examples are as follows (34 to 37):

- (34) Deneyebilir miyim? (SO, 5;4)  
*Can I try it?*
- (35) Alper için bitince bana verir misin? (HO, 4;11)  
*Alper, can you give it to me when you are finished?*
- (36) Hadi yapalım. (SO&HO, 4;5)  
*Let's do it.*
- (37) Çok yumuşak ya keşke benim olsaymış. (IMP, 4;5)  
*It's very soft, I wish it were mine.*

Interestingly, in the Low Power-Low Imposition case, when the children were connecting the puzzle pieces, the three perspectives are found to be almost equal, which are as follows: hearer oriented (32%), impersonal (31%), speaker oriented (28%) as in examples (38) to (40). The SO&HO perspective is observed at a much lower frequency (9%) as in example (41).

- (38) Yanlış parçalara dikkat etmelisin. (HO, 4;6)  
*You should be careful with the wrong pieces.*
- (39) Ben bunu alacağım şimdi. (SO, 4;10)  
*I will take this one now.*
- (40) Orası olmadı. (IMP, 4;11)  
*It did not fit there.*
- (41) İlk önce kenarlardan başlayalım hadi (SO&HO, 4;5)  
*Let's start with the corners first.*

The overall results show that in all cases, the hearer oriented and speaker oriented perspectives predominate the other request perspectives. The striking point is, different from the other cases, in Low Power-Low Imposition case, there is a notable usage in the impersonal category as well as the SO&HO category.

#### 4 Discussion

The data has shown that the preschool children, four and five year olds, are mainly direct in their requests. The analyses of the use of the head act and adjunct(s) show that regardless of being in a high or low imposition situation, children do not prefer to use adjunct(s) to head acts; instead, they use the head act most frequently in their requests. An important finding of this study is that the children are observed to use nonverbal requests when the power and imposition are low. The reason might be due to the nature of the situation or impatience for completing the activity, which is also considered as a negative face-threatening act according to Brown and Levinson (1987).

As to the strategy types of head acts, children tend to use direct strategies more. Nevertheless, it might be suggested that the nature of the cases (as discussed soon below) have an effect on the choice of strategy types. Contrary to the expected indirect strategies in high power and high imposition levels in Turkish adults (Doğançay-Aktuna and Kamışlı, 1996), Turkish children use direct strategies most in the High Power-High Imposition case, which is in parallel with other request studies with children (McTear, 1985; Pedlow et al., 2001). There might be two constraints that might have affected this result. Firstly, the distance between the children and the researchers tended to decrease across the situations, i.e. from situation 1 to 4. Secondly, in Situations 1, 2, and

4, the researchers gave the instruments used in the experiment as a present to the class after the data collection sessions (i.e. the puzzle, the colored dough, and the kaleidoscope). Therefore, children might have thought that the instruments would be the belonging of the class and they could play with them whenever they wanted to which caused the effect of the expected high imposition to decrease.

In the High Power-Low Imposition case where children ask the researchers for some water, they use a formulaic language very frequently. As stated by Gleason, Perlman and Lenk (1984), children use politeness routines in association with explicit socialization cases. This is also explained by Watts (2003) as being a politic behavior that is the form expected in social situations. Therefore the high usage of these formulaic expressions in Situation 3 (asking for water) implies that Turkish children are sensitive to the appropriate social use of language in certain contexts as in the example (16).

The data show that children use direct strategies more than the other strategies, particularly in low power situations. When imposition is taken into consideration in these cases, it is observed that conventionally indirect strategies are used more when the imposition is high; whereas nonconventionally indirect strategies are used more when the imposition is low. Therefore, it can be suggested that imposition has an effect on the directness level of the request in low power cases.

In the Low Power-Low Imposition case, the use of nonverbal and nonconventionally indirect requests is higher than the use of these strategies in all the other cases. The high proportion of nonverbal requests might stem from the excitement the children feel to complete the puzzle (see example 27). As to the high frequency of nonconventionally indirect requests, thinking aloud and/or indirectly seeking for mutual solution when placing the pieces might have an effect on the result as in the example (25). For all the cases of this study, the situations are more decisive in children's language use than the power relations.

The results also indicate that children prefer to use the speaker oriented and the hearer oriented perspectives more than the SO&HO and impersonal perspectives. As Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) state, in requests as hearer is *under threat*, so as to soften the impact of the imposition, the requester prefers to use the speaker oriented perspective. In our data, children use the speaker oriented perspective, which indicates that they are aware of the imposition and share the burden of the request with the hearer. When the imposition is low, the power plays a role in affecting the request perspective, that is, children prefer to use the speaker oriented perspective more when the power is high.

However, in the Low Power-Low Imposition case where children did a puzzle activity in pairs, it is observed that there is a notable usage in the impersonal category as well as the SO&HO category. As Blum-Kulka and



Olshtain (1984: 203) suggest, “in requests it is the hearer who is *under threat*, any avoidance in naming the addressee as the principle performer of the act serves to soften the impact of the imposition”. Thus, the reason of using the SO&HO and the impersonal perspectives might result from the fact that children take other participant’s perspective into consideration to be more polite and share the burden of the request in this kind of shared activities (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

## 5 Summary and Conclusion

The nature of requests requires imposition on the hearer and requires the speaker to bear the status of the hearer in mind; thus, the language of the request is revised constantly while talking with other parties. To maintain an adult-like conversation, children also need to acquire the unwritten pragmatic rules of the language.

The present study aims to explore whether children are aware of the power-imposition relations in their requests, whether they identify head act structures, strategy types and the request perspectives. Considering the structures of the requests, children mainly prefer to use the head act in their requests regardless of the power and the imposition of the situation they are in. Additionally, they use nonverbal requests especially when power and the imposition are low. As to the strategy types of head acts, children mainly use direct requests in all three of the situations; however, they use conventionally indirect formulaic language in an expected way in certain social situations, i.e. asking for some water from someone. Besides, it is observed that children get used to and become acquainted with an outsider so easily that they adjust the request forms immediately and the power is no more a power for them. Concerning request perspectives, it appears that children mainly take the imposition of the request into consideration rather than the power of the requestee.

In sum, this study reveals that contrary to adults, four- and five-year-old children are more direct in their requests. Yet, they are sensitive to the situations where conventionalized form of language is required. This is also parallel with the results of Doğançay-Aktuna and Kızıllı’s (1996) study. In that study, they assert that ‘people seem to act in accordance with the demands of the situation, rather than in line with their status levels’ (p. 20).

For further studies, investigating the younger and older children would be beneficial to see when and how the requests appear, and to observe their developmental path to the adult-like usages. It is also crucial to observe requests in various situations to see the effect of the context on children’s preferences of certain forms. Particularly, while designing the situations in speech act research with children, the routinized contexts where formulaic

language is likely to be used should be avoided since it might hinder to observe the effect of power and cost variables effectively.

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