

# THE STRATEGIES OF REQUEST BY INDONESIAN AND AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS

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**Abstract:** Request is a kind of activity that is never separated from humans as social beings. It is also the form of interactional activities in our daily life. People deliver the request strategies depending on their identity, especially their culture. This study aims to explain the use of request strategies by two different cultures, Indonesian and Australian. Indonesia follows the eastern culture, while Australia follows the western culture. Both cultures are interesting objects of the research about request strategies. To define the strategy used by both cultures, the researcher has chosen the theory of request strategies by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain. After applying the theory to the data, the researcher found that both cultures resulted in different direct strategies. However, in other levels of directness, Indonesia and Australia have the same result.

**Keywords:** *Australian Students, Cross-cultural, Indonesia Students, Request Strategies*

## INTRODUCTION

Interaction is one of the communication forms that has never been apart from human life. The interactional study has related to the speech acts that have some forms, for example, requests. People deliver many requests for various reasons. Moreover, each culture has its characteristics regarding the use of request strategies. Wierzbicka (2013) states that cultural difference influences speech acts strategies in a conversation. Besides going to cultural differences, there is another aspect that people must realize in a conversation. People should realize that social variable can be the factors that determine the use of requests like power or status (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Some researchers have done studies about the strategies of requests that are used in cross-cultural contexts. For example, Balman et al. (2020) discussed request strategies in the email experienced by Indonesian students in Japan. The authors analyzed the data using Blum-Kulka's theory (1989) about a modified version of the request strategies and cross-cultural realization project (CCSARP)

by Economidou-Koetsidis. The findings showed if Indonesian Students prefer to use indirect strategies while writing high imposition requests.

Another study of requests in terms of cross-cultural has been done by Han (2013) about the contrastive study in request strategies by British and Chinese. This study also used Blum-Kulka's theory to analyze the data. The findings showed the realization of three main request strategies: direct, conventional indirectness, and non-conventional indirectness. The results are that native Chinese speakers preferred to use direct strategies, while British English seldom chose to use imperatives while requesting.

This study explores the use of request strategies by two cultures and compares the final result between the two cultures. This study decided to choose undergraduate students as the participants. The researcher selected two cultures which are Indonesian students and Australian students. Both cultures represented the opposite cultural value between them. The different results are defined depending on the analysis using Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's theory (1984) about the directness level in request strategies. The theory classified directness levels, which are direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect strategies, so it gets different results from using request strategies between Indonesian and Australian Students.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Speech Acts**

Meyer (2009) explained that the forms of speech acts are direct and indirect. Direct speech acts are often delivered with imperative utterances like 'go away!' which means to ask someone to go away (Meyer, 2009). Meanwhile, indirect speech acts tend to relate to politeness strategies because it aims to avoid some conceptual problems. After all, other aspects need to be realized, like different social classes, gender, age, or the region that influence human communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Meyer, 2009; Tannen, 1985; Wierzbicka, 2013). For instance, people will say, 'the weather is really hot, which means if the speaker wants the hearer to turn off the fan or open the window, but the speaker utters indirectly.

Tannen (1985) explained that people should pay attention to the purpose of the utterance delivered by the speaker because the intention often delivers indirectly. As a result, the conversation can be misleading, although the speaker masters grammatical or lexical commands without considering pragmatics (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). On the other hand, Brown and Levinson (1987)

defined that pragmatics awareness in communication creates a smooth conversation between interlocutors, specifically in indirect speech acts.

### **Request Strategies**

Request strategies are also commonly used in human communication—request strategies delivered like speech acts directly and indirectly. Wierzbicka (2013) and Meyer (2009) explained that indirect speech helps people to avoid imperative utterances by intensifying the declarative sentence. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) composed a theory of request strategies divided into three forms. There are direct strategies or impositive, conventionally indirect strategies, and non-conventionally indirect strategies. Direct strategies mean the utterance that delivers indirect way like imperative form.

Meanwhile, conventional indirect strategies are delivered through the question statement, and non-conventionally indirect strategies deliver in indirect statements with hidden meanings of the utterance. First, direct strategies classify into four types: mood derivable, performative, obligation statement, and want a statement. Then, conventionally indirect strategies classify into two forms which are suggestory formula and query preparatory. The last one is non-conventionally indirect strategies which are divided into two forms which are strong hint and mild hint.

### **METHOD**

This study applied the qualitative method, especially in the form of DCT or Discourse Completion Task. Discourse Completion Task is one kind of qualitative study called descriptive qualitative. The term Discourse Completion Task was coined by Blum-Kulka (1982), and it is used for large-scale speech acts named Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns Project (CCSARP). The data of this study is the form of text included in the descriptive qualitative method (Creswell, 2014). Birjandi and Rezaei (2010) stated that Discourse Completion Task is a compatible research method in cross-cultural pragmatics.

The researcher did two steps for data collection. Firstly, the researcher created four questions about strategies of request for the discourse completion task depending on their daily activities in the university. In addition, the situations were created considering the social variable that related to the student's relation in university. Second, the researcher gave the task to the participants and asked them to fill the task. After that, the researcher took the paper back from the participants. After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed data in several steps. First, the researcher divided the data into two-

part based on culture. Second, she classified data into the part of directness level based on the theory belonging to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). Lastly, the researcher concluded based on the use of request strategies in Indonesian and Australian students.

## FINDINGS

The researcher has created several situations regarding Discourse Completion Task. Four situations have their characteristics based on the social variable. The researcher used social distance and social status to make the situation the base. The researcher has made a particular sign for each level in social variables. The levels of social status are higher, equal, and lower. When the hearer has higher social status, the sign will be +SS. Then, another form is =SS for equal social status with the hearer, and -SS for the lower social status with the hearer.

Moreover, the social distance is divided into two parts: close social distance with the sign +SD and distant social distance through the sign -SD. To see the specific difference in all situations, the researcher decided to use the same social distance but a different social status. Even though the social status of some situations is the same, the researcher created the fettle in various backgrounds.

The first situation described the relationship between the students and the staff administration office of the university. It means the hearer has higher social status because he has more power than the speaker. For the social distance, the speaker has a distant social distance. The situation was described when the speaker asked for help with scholarship administration.

The second situation described the situation between the students and the lecturer. It also has the same social variables as the first situation, which are higher social status because the lecturer has more power than the students, and distant social distance because the students are trying to keep the respect of their lecturer. The situation was described when the students asked for the extension task because they had not finished their assignment.

The researcher described the third situation of the relationship between the students with their friends inside the organization meeting. The researcher designed that the relationship between the students does not seem so close. So, it can conclude that social status is equal and social distance is distant. Moreover, the situation was described as an uncomfortable moment. The researcher designed that the hearer is smoking during organizational meetings, and it makes the participants disturbed cause the smoke cigarettes.

The last situation is designed with the same relation as the third situation. It is the relationship between the students. Therefore, it has equal social status and distant social distance because the researcher designed the situation between the students who are strangers to each other. The situation is about the students asking someone to take a picture of their class.

The findings of the request strategies used in the data are explained below.

### **Australian Students**

According to the first situation, the researcher found that the most commonly used level of directness by Australian students is direct strategies, specifically performative. However, the researcher found another level of directness in conventionally indirect strategies, which is a suggestory form, and non-conventionally indirect strategies, which is a strong hint. Data 1 below is one of the representation data that contained the most commonly used level indirect by Australian students.

"I'm just wondering if I could get an application letter when possible, please"  
(Data 1)

Data 1 shows that the participants were included in impositive or direct request strategies, specifically in the performative type. It belongs to performative because the speaker started by saying, "I am just wondering if I could get..". It shows if the speaker created an order or begged for help. It is also called direct strategy because the speaker tells what they want directly to the interlocutor by the sentence after the word "if". Even the speaker delivers it by refining the request so that the utterance does not seem to dictate the interlocutor.

According to the second situation, the researcher found that conventionally indirect strategies are the most commonly used level of directness. All level directness is found in the second situation. However, the results show that each level of directness only consisted of one sub-category. The most commonly used is conventionally indirect strategies through query preparatory. The second position is direct strategies through the performative form. Then the last level is non-conventionally indirect strategies through mild hints. In the data below, the researcher chose the utterance representing the commonly used level of directness for the second situation.

"Hi (lecturers name), just on behalf of myself and other classmates, as we have reasonable unexpected time delays, could we request an extension for the assignment due to be collected today?" (Data 2)

The utterance above belongs to conventionally indirect strategies, specifically query preparatory. Even though the speaker delivered the purpose

of the statement clearly, the utterance does not include direct strategies because the form is a question. Based on the theory of level directness. There is no form of a question that belongs to impositive or direct strategies. It is also included as query preparatory because the words "could we request.." shows if the speaker asked for the interlocutor to fulfill the speaker's request. The speaker delivered the purpose directly but in the form of a question.

Meanwhile, in the third situation, the researcher found that all participants used conventionally indirect strategies, specifically in query preparatory form. However, some participants combined the query preparatory with another level of directness in impositive or non-conventionally indirect strategies. The results show if one data combined query preparatory with suggestion called suggestory formula and with a strong hint which is part of non-conventionally indirect strategies. Therefore, the researcher chooses the data below to represent the analysis of the third situation.

"Excuse me \*name\*, would you mind going outside to smoke, or even waiting until the meeting is over?" (Data 3)

In the third data, the utterance consisted of requests and suggestions. By saying "would you mind..", it shows if the speaker presented the form of query preparatory because the speaker asked about the hearer's ability to not smoke inside the room. In addition, there is another conventionally indirect strategy called the suggestory formula. It is delivered as a second question through the statement "even waiting until the meeting is over". The speaker suggested that the hearer to smoke after the meeting have done because it disturbs everyone in the room.

For the fourth situation, the data analysis shows that if all data is used, the level of directness is conventionally indirect strategies, specifically query preparatory. All participants answered the same questions and just had a little different greeting. Therefore, the researcher has chosen the data below to represent all data for analyzing step.

"Hi, if you've got a second, could you please take a picture of us?" (Data 4)

The fourth data is the form of a question. The speaker asked a request in the form of a question. The purpose of the question is delivered directly to the hearer. However, it is included as conventionally indirect strategies because no one of the question forms includes impositive or direct strategies. Specifically, this utterance belongs to query preparatory. It shows through the statement, "could you please.." that shows if the speaker were asking for the hearer's ability to take a picture of them.

### Indonesian Students

In the first situation, the researcher found two types of level indirectness that Indonesian students use. There are direct strategies and non-conventionally indirect strategies. The most common level of directness found in the first situation is direct strategies through a want statement. It also resulted in conventionally indirect strategies by query preparatory. The data below represents the analysis of the first situation of Indonesian students.

*"Assalamuallaikum, permisi bapak/ibu. Mohon maaf pak/ ibu mengganggu, permisi pak/bu saya mau mendaftar beasiswa. Jika masih sibuk saya bisa menemui bapak/ ibu kapan ya? Baik pak/ bu. Terima kasih."* (Data 5).

The fifth data shows if the utterance belongs to directive strategies called a want statement. It is proven by the statement *"saya mau mendaftar beasiswa,"* which means "I want to apply for a scholarship." The speaker highlighted the data with the words "I want," which means it is included as a want statement. Besides, there is another level of directness that is included in the data, which is conventionally indirect strategies through the question *"Jika masih sibuk saya bisa menemui Bapak kapan ya?"* which means, "when you have time to meet me." The utterance aims to ask about the time when the hearer can fulfill the request from the speaker for a meeting. The researcher concluded that this utterance tends to be a direct strategy because the speaker delivered the want statement before asking the hearer.

The second situation resulted in the most commonly used conventionally indirect strategies, specifically query preparatory. Meanwhile, another level of directness in the findings is direct strategies through the form of performative and want statements. The utterance below is included in the part of direct strategies that commonly found data of this situation. It represents the analysis of the second situation by Indonesian students.

*"Mohon maaf Pak/Bu, apakah Anda berkenan jika tugasnya kami kumpulkan maksimal pukul 00.00?"* (Data 6).

Data 6 shows the level of directness, conventionally indirect strategies through query preparatory. The speakers started the utterance by apologizing for the form. After the apologizing form, the statement *"apakah anda berkenan,"* which means "Would you mind.." means that the speaker used query preparatory because the speaker asked for a request to the hearer's willingness to give the speaker about the extension time.

The third situation resulted in all directness levels in the data. Mostly, Indonesian students used non-conventionally indirect strategies, which is a strong hint. However, other findings show if Indonesian students also have another level of indirectness, specifically in query preparatory and suggestional



formulas. These are part of conventionally indirect strategies. The researcher concluded that from this situation, Indonesian students prefer to use indirect strategies of request rather than direct strategies. The utterance below is chosen by the researcher that contains the most commonly used by Indonesian students, which is a strong hint.

*"((Pura-pura batuk)), Aduh asep nya bau banget!" (Data 7)*

Data 7 consisted of two different forms of language: spoken and body language. Both spoken and body language show the same directness level called non-conventionally indirect strategies. The specific form of non-conventionally indirect strategies is a strong hint. The utterance belongs to a strong hint because it does not deliver the purpose of the utterance directly to the hearer. For example, the speaker tends to do sarcasm rather than asking the hearer directly not to smoke in the room. However, even if it belongs to an indirect request, the utterance shows if it is a vital clue for the hearer, and it is really possible if the hearer understands what the speaker means by the utterance.

Indonesian students' most commonly used directness level in the fourth situation is conventionally indirect strategies, specifically query preparatory. Moreover, other directness levels were also found by the researcher. There is mood derivable as the part of direct strategies and a mild hint as to the part of non-conventionally indirect strategies. The utterance below represents one data of the last situation by Indonesian students.

*"Kak kelihatannya kamu seorang fotografer, minta tolong fotoin dong." (Data 8).*

Data 8 contained the level of the directness of mood derivable. Mood derivable is part of direct strategies. It is called mood derivable because it uses the grammatical mood or imperative form. There is no form of a question, so the utterance is not part of indirect strategies. The speaker said if he asked the hearer to take a picture of them. The words "*minta tolong fotoin dong!*" means "Take a picture of us, please," shows if it is an imperative form regarded as a request of the speaker.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the findings above, the researcher found several points of difference between the request strategies of Indonesian and Australian students. As explained in chapter 2, this study used the theory belonging to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain about the theory of request directness level to classify the type of request. According to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), the directness level is divided into direct or impositives, conventionally indirect strategies, and non-conventionally indirect strategies. In addition, all the levels have other types.



According to the list of situations, the researcher only divided it into two types of social variables, which are +SS, -SD, and =SS, -SD. However, even though the first situation and the second have the same social variables, the background story of the situation still gives a different condition. The third situation and fourth situations are as well as the first and second situations. The difference in the result between Indonesia and Australia is explained below.

In the first situation, Most Australian students prefer to use direct strategies for more than half of the total data. They used the performative, and for the rest data, they used the suggestory formula as the part of conventionally indirect strategies and a strong hint as to the part of non-conventionally indirect strategies. In the second situation, the data shows whether the participants use conventionally indirect strategies as query preparatory. Another directness level is also found In the analysis, which are direct performative strategies and a mild hint of non-conventionally indirect strategies. In the third situation, Australian students prefer to use query preparatory, which is included in conventionally indirect strategies. The data also resulted in another conventionally indirect, suggestory formula and non-conventionally indirect, which is a strong hint. The last situation resulted in all students using a conventionally indirect speech act called query preparatory.

For the Indonesian students, the researcher found if Indonesian students prefer to use direct strategies, specifically want statements. They also used another part of the directness level, query preparatory and mild hint, as part of indirect strategies. For the second situation, the researcher found that the most commonly used level of directness is conventionally indirect strategies which are query preparatory. Other forms of directness level are the part of impositive, which is performative and want a statement. The third situation resulted that all students using indirect strategies. However, most students used non-conventionally indirect strategies called strong hints, and other findings are part of conventionally direct strategies, which are query preparatory and suggestory formulas. The last situation described if Indonesian students prefer to use conventional indirect strategies called query preparatory. Meanwhile, Indonesian students also used mood derivable as the part of direct strategies and a mild hint as to the part of non-conventionally indirect strategies.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data analysis above, the researcher has concluded some points found after analyzing the data. In the first situation, Australian and Indonesian students prefer to use the same directness level, that is, direct

strategies. However, both cultures result in different types of direct strategies. For example, Indonesian students prefer to use want statements, but Australian students prefer to use performative. The second situation also resulted if both cultures gave the same result of directness level. Most students used conventionally indirect strategies named query preparatory. The third situation resulted in different findings between Australian and Indonesian students. Australian students mostly used conventionally indirect strategies and query preparatory, while Indonesian students primarily used non-conventionally indirect strategies, which is a strong hint. The last situation resulted in both cultures preferring to use query preparatory as part of conventionally indirect strategies.

According to the explanation above, the researcher concludes that the findings depend on both the social variable and how the situational background of the speaker. The first situation and second situation gave different results because the speaker in the first situation felt pressed, but the second situation made the students feel guilty. The third situation also gave a different result from the fourth situation. The third situation described uncomfortable conditions, and the fourth described asking for the speaker's help. All the reasons above explain the difference in request strategies between Indonesian and Australian students. Also, the researcher concluded that the results did not depend on variable social but also situational background. The researcher suggests that future research should use another method. It can be an interview or another spoken form that can create a specific and concrete result rather than the present study.

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