

## Politeness and style differences in the Turkish language: the case of pre-service English language teachers

Özlem UTKU<sup>1</sup>

Zeynep ÇETİN KÖROĞLU<sup>2</sup>

**APA:** Utku, Ö.; Çetin Köroğlu, Z. (2020). Politeness and style differences in the Turkish language: the case of pre-service English language teachers. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (19), 89-105. DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.752145.

### Abstract

Being polite or perceived as a polite person is a difficult task when learning different languages and experiencing different cultures because learning grammar or vocabulary of a language is not enough to be perceived as a polite person since one should learn social and cultural values of the community as well. Moreover, politeness strategies and styles utilized while one is speaking his or her mother tongue can vary in a contextual manner. This study aims at examining politeness strategies and style differences the Turkish language. In accordance with this aim, a discourse completion test with four cases was prepared and administered to 32 pre-service English language teachers. The findings indicated that the participants, to a large extent, used positive politeness strategies while using the intimate style whereas they generally preferred negative politeness strategies while using the consultative and the formal styles. Additionally, it was found out that the family background of the participants has no meaningful influence on the way they use politeness strategies in different styles. However, it is concluded that gender and age of the participants affect their choice of the address forms.

**Keywords:** Politeness, style, Turkish language, discourse completion test

## Türkçedeki nezaket ve stil farklılıkları: İngilizce öğretmen adayları örneği

### Öz

Kibar olmak veya kibar bir kişi olarak algılanmak, farklı dilleri öğrenirken ve farklı kültürleri deneyimlerken zor bir görevdir çünkü bireyin bir toplumun sosyal ve kültürel değerlerini öğrenmesi gerektiğinden bir dilin gramerini veya kelime bilgisini öğrenmek, kibar bir kişi olarak algılanmak için yeterli olmayabilir. Ayrıca, bireyin anadilini konuşurken kullandığı nezaket stratejileri ve stilleri bağlamsal olarak değişebilir. Bu çalışma, Türk dilinde ortaya çıkan nezaket stratejileri ve stil farklılıklarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, dört vakadan oluşan bir söylem tamamlama testi hazırlanmış ve 32 İngilizce öğretmen adayına uygulanmıştır. Bulgular, katılımcıların büyük ölçüde, samimi stili kullanırken olumlu kibarlık stratejileri kullandıklarını, danışma ve resmi tarzları kullanırken genellikle olumsuz kibarlık stratejilerini tercih ettiklerini göstermiştir. Ayrıca, katılımcıların aile geçmişinin kibarlık stratejilerini farklı tarzlarda kullanma şekilleri üzerinde anlamlı bir etkisinin olmadığı bulunmuştur. Ancak, katılımcıların cinsiyet ve yaşlarının hitap seçimini etkilediği sonucuna varılmıştır.

1 Öğr. Gör., Trabzon Üniversitesi, Rektörlük Yabancı Diller Bölümü (Trabzon, Türkiye), ozlemutku36@gmail.com, 0000-0001-7978-9195 [Makale kayıt tarihi: 25.02.2020-kabul tarihi: 20.06.2020; DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.752145]

2 Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Bayburt Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi ABD (Bayburt, Türkiye), zcetin@bayburt.edu.tr, 0000-0002-9456-8910

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Nezaket, stil, Türk dili, söylem tamamlama testi

## 1. Introduction

It might be highly complicated to be perceived as a polite person when a foreign or a second language is learned and a completely new culture is experienced. Politeness involves various aspects because “it requires understanding not only the language, but the social and cultural values of the community as well” (Holmes, 2013, p. 284). Thus, it is not sufficient to be proficient in the grammar rules or vocabulary of a language, and individuals should also have knowledge concerning politeness rules and strategies of the language.

According to Holmes (2013) social relationship of social distance or solidarity and relative power are the key concepts to decide whether any behaviour is polite enough or not in a community or culture. Positive and negative politeness occur from this basic distinction. Positive politeness is based on solidarity and it generally emphasizes common attitudes and values. For instance, when a company owner suggests that a worker should use her first name to her, this is a positive politeness move, expressing solidarity and minimising status differences between them. On the other hand, negative politeness focuses on social distance and respecting status differences. In other words, it pays attention to respect and avoid to intrude people. For example, a worker’s use of both title and boss’s last name in a conversation such as ‘our boss Mr. Brown said that...’.

Formality is another dimension of being polite and speakers’ roles may affect the appropriate speech in a formal context. Holmes (2013, p. 285) provides a comprehensible example to the formality dimension that “at the dinner table calling your brother, who is a judge, your honour will be perceived as inappropriate or humorous whereas in a law court, calling him Tom will be considered disrespectful.”

Different cultures and these cultures’ culture-specific understandings may cause certain misunderstanding among individuals who experience totally different culture. For this reason, being polite in different cultures should be explained and clarified except from global and general principles. In this respect, learning a foreign language includes much more than learning words’ literal meaning, target language’s grammar and pronunciation. A skilled language learner requires to know sociolinguistic dimension of the target language for polite acceptance and refusal which differ cross-culturally.

### 1. 1. Politeness theory of Brown and Levinson

Brown and Levinson (1987) defined politeness as redressive action which is taken to counterbalance the disruptive effect of face-threatening acts. They propose the term ‘face’ which refers to a speaker’s sense of linguistic and social identity and divide the face into two different types: positive face and negative face. Fundamentally, negative face is related to preserves as well as personal areas in which people have certain rights and responsibilities regarding particular activities. Freedom of action and freedom from imposition can be given as basic examples for negative face (Kedveç, 2013, p. 434). On the other hand, positive face is more related to the interlocutor’s positive consistent personality and self-image. Considering positive face, it can be said that there is an effort to protect this self-image because there is a desire for being appreciated and accepted (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

It is also stated that people can encounter certain acts challenging the face of an interlocutor. These acts are defined as face-threatening acts (FTAs) by Brown and Levinson (1987).

According to them, face-threatening acts can occur in two main different ways. Firstly, they may affect the speaker's face or the hearer's face, so either of them might be threatened by FTAs. Secondly, the hearer's/speaker's positive face or negative face can be threatened by FTAs. The actions, behaviours or words that threaten the positive face of the hearer might include the following:

(i) utterances that negatively evaluate the hearer's self-image, i.e. positive face. Disapproval, accusations, criticism, contradictions, complaints and disagreements are the basic expressions threatening the positive face of the interlocutors.

(ii) expressions which reflect that the speaker does not attach much importance to the hearer's positive face. For instance, when one expresses his or her opinion violently without considering the hearer's emotions, thoughts or taboo topics, the hearer's self-image or positive face is, quite likely, threatened by the act of the speaker.

What threatens the hearer's personal freedom, i.e. negative face can be exemplified as follows:

(i) expressions related to the hearer's future actions. Ordering, requesting, making suggestions, reminding something or warning and threatening about something can be stated as basic examples for the acts that threaten the hearer's negative face.

(ii) acts expressing the speaker's desire towards the hearer or his/her goods. To exemplify, giving compliments to the hearer or expressing positive emotions about the hearer are certain actions related to the negative face as well.

Considering FTAs that threaten the speaker's self-image, apologies, accepting a compliment, the breakdown of physical or emotional control, self-humiliation, confession can be stated as certain common examples. Lastly, FTAs threatening personal freedom of the speaker comprise expressing and accepting thanks as well as acceptance of offers or compliments, apologies, and excuses.

According to the context in which the interaction occurs or which face is threatened, the speaker is supposed to utilize certain strategies in order to save his/her face: positive politeness, negative politeness, bald-on-record and off-record-indirect strategy (Brown, 2015, pp. 327-328; Navaey & Bakčić, 2018, p.3). As their name imply, positive politeness strategies are employed in order to save the positive face whereas negative politeness strategies are the ones individuals use to protect their negative face. On the other hand, "off-record strategies are based on "indirectness" and the point is not to perform any redressive action at all in bald-on-record strategies" (Brown, 2015, p. 327). They are also compared in terms of their usage considering the relative power of speaker and addressee, their social distance, and the intrinsic ranking of the face-threateningness of an imposition. Brown (2015) suggests that positive politeness and bald-on-record strategies are most appropriate and cost effective for low levels while negative politeness strategies are expected to be employed for higher levels, and for the threats at the highest level, indirectness can be the safest alternative. In the present study, in association with the style differences, the politeness strategies used by Turkish pre-service English language teachers were analysed.

## 1. 2. Style

Wolfram and Schilling-Estes define language style, as “variation in the speech of individual speakers” (1998, p. 214). Quite similarly, according to Janet Holmes (2013), the style is language variation which reflects changes in situational factors, such as addressee, setting, task or topic.

People’s styles of speech, i.e. stylistic features, show certain aspects regarding people’s identity and the contexts where the language is used. For this reason, sociolinguistics puts forward different types of styles by considering interlocutors’ personal and social background and the context in which the interaction and/or communication occur.

### *The intimate or informal style*

The intimate or informal style is used with close friends or family and with casual acquaintances (Açıklalın, 1995). Use of elliptical construction (when participants have shared information about the topic they talk on) and use of second person singular pronoun are the examples reflecting the intimate or informal style use in Turkish.

### *The consultative style*

The consultative style is used in semi-formal situations such as between strangers, between doctor and patient or teacher and student (Açıklalın, 1995). Kocaman (1992) describes this type of style as “normal or ordinary style” (as cited in Açıklalın, 1995, p. 30).

### *The formal style*

When using the formal style, the purpose of the speaker is to inform the addressee on an individual basis (Açıklalın, 1995) This type of style can be used during lectures or seminars. In Turkish certain tense markers, passive constructions and plural pronouns are used in the formal style.

### *The frozen style*

Açıklalın (1995) states that it is used in print and the declaration of the situations where the addressee is not allowed to cross-question the author. While reading a newspaper article or a book, you cannot ask a question to the author directly and simultaneously but instead, you should write an e-mail or a letter to the author to get in touch with him or her.

### *The scientific style*

The scientific style is relatively new when compared to the others. It is generally used by doctors, researchers and scientists. Açıklalın (1995, p. 31) summarizes the characteristics of the scientific style as follows:

“It is simple and clear.”

“It is objective.”

“It is abstract and emotionally neutral.”

“It includes technical terms, figures and symbols.”

“It includes much information – the density of information.”

### 1. 3. Review of research studies on politeness theory

Even though the number of empirical research studies conducted on politeness theory in Turkish context is relatively limited, the vast majority of studies focusing on politeness theory basically discusses the theory as well as puts forward extremely useful explanations and crucial practical information regarding politeness concepts in different cultures. As a conceptual paper, Morand and Ocker's (2003) study makes enquiries into how politeness theory may contribute to the role relations in computer-mediated communication (CMC). Firstly, a review of the theory and comprehensive linguistics lists of politeness are set forth and then, the researchers discuss (1) whether politeness occurs in CMC, (2) if dramaturgical concerns are noticed by individuals in CMC modes and motivate them, (3) how the term “socio-emotional” is perceived in CMC environments and how the socio-emotional relations occur within CMC, (4) how negative politeness is used in CMC environments, (5) what relational ties affect politeness in CMC, and (6) how politeness norms have been evolved in CMC. Suggesting detailed propositions on the relations between politeness theory and CMC, it is concluded that in CMC research, politeness theory can be a useful tool. Moreover, the researchers emphasize the role of technology in today's world, which is constantly changing and updating itself, and point out that “as CMC becomes more a mainstay of life, those normative routines regarding politeness, as well as other aspects of relational communication, will begin to jell” (Morand & Ocker, 2003, p. 9).

Different from the study of Morand and Ocker (2003) proposing global suggestions on politeness in CMC environments, Fukada and Asato (2004) go into the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson as well in their study but they specifically discuss Japanese honorifics associating them with politeness theory. However, besides evaluating Japanese honorifics within Brown and Levinson's theory, Matsumoto's (1988) and Ide's (1989) arguments are set forward to explain the issue of honorifics in Japanese culture. Similarly, Hudson's (2011) research study aims to shed light on how students use or do not use honorifics in Japanese conversations with professors. Data were collected through 12 conversations, ranging in length from 4 to 44 minutes. All conversations took place between native speakers of Japanese and 8 undergraduate students, 7 graduate students and 7 professors participated in the study. The results showed that the vast majority of the college students used honorifics even though it has been predicted as a result of the recent reports that young Japanese speakers do not often use honorifics. Additionally, it was found out that “honorific usage might vary greatly within the same discourse as well as among individuals” (Hudson, 2011, p. 3689).

From a different perspective, Nakane (2006) examined the relationship between silence and politeness. More precisely, how the participants used silence as a politeness strategy was the main research question of the study. The study was carried out in a multicultural setting, throughout the courses held by Australian lectures and taken by both Japanese and Australian students, so it was aimed at exploring whether there would be any differences between Australian and Japanese students' use of silence as a politeness strategy. However, besides investigating how the silence was employed a strategy of politeness by the student participants, the data were collected considering the addressee perspective and the relationships between silence and talk. In other words, how Australian lecturers perceived Japanese students' silence in the matter of politeness and how talk and silence negotiated in an intercultural classroom environment were also examined. As data collection tools, four

instruments were utilized: semi-structured interviews, questionnaire, field notes, and video recordings. The findings indicated that silence was employed as a politeness strategy in three different ways. Firstly, it was found that Japanese student participants preferred being silent to maintain their positive face, that is, to avoid face loss. They stated that they behaved in that way because of their perceived insufficient language proficiency. The results also revealed that Japanese student participants remained silent since they did not want to perform a face threatening act against the addressees, so in that case, silence was used as a “Don’t do the FTA” strategy. And, thirdly, the findings indicated that silence was used as an “off-record” strategy by the Japanese student participants. More precisely, if one prefers remaining silent after a question or a comment, this behaviour can be interpreted as “off-record” strategy, and the findings showed that the Japanese student participants used silence as an indirect way of saying “I do not know the answer”, “I have no idea” or “I am not quite sure if I have understood the question” when a question was addressed to them. On the other hand, it was found that the lecturers perceived silence negatively. They stated it as a face-threatening act to their face and a deficiency in their academic knowledge, so it can also be concluded from the findings that there is a mismatch between the way the lecturers perceived silence and the way the students used silence, which is closely related to cultural differences. Therefore, what makes sense in terms of being polite in different cultures should be investigated and clarified so as to facilitate individuals’ intercultural competences.

As a recent study carried out on indirectness and politeness, Marti’s (2006) research study contributes crucially to the relevant global and Turkish literature. The study was conducted to investigate whether the pragmatic transfer from the German language may have an effect on Turkish-German bilingual returnees’ pragmatic performance. However, Turkish monolingual speakers also participated in the study to examine both the realisation and politeness perception of requests. A discourse completion test, including 10 different situations, and a politeness rating questionnaire were utilized to collect data. The findings of the DCT analysis did not reveal pragmatic transfer in all the participants. Besides, “as for overall directness in requests, no significant difference was found between the Turkish monolinguals and the Turkish–German bilinguals” (Marti, 2006, p. 1862). The results also showed that Turkish monolingual speakers preferred using direct strategies while Turkish-German bilingual speakers preferred indirect strategies. This finding was found to be consistent with the results of the Huls’ (1989) study (Marti, 2006, p. 1862).

Another research study conducted in the Turkish context is the study of Ruhi and Işık-Güler (2007). The study focuses on two main issues: “the conceptualization of face and related aspects of self in Turkish” and “the implications of the conceptualization of face and the self in interaction in Turkish for understanding relational work at the emic and the etic levels” (Ruhi & Işık-Güler, 2007, p. 681). The researchers examined two root lexemes, i.e. *yüz* and *gönül*, and idioms derived from the lexemes in Turkish. Then, with the aim of conceptualizing relational work, the conclusions drawn from the analysis are explained. It is pointed out that examining “the affective dimensions of self and communication” is crucial and investigating them will possibly contribute to other dimensions of self-presentation (Ruhi & Işık-Güler, 2007, pp. 708 – 709).

A more recent research study was carried out by Kahraman (2013) in the Turkish context as well. However, different from the studies of Marti (2006) and Ruhi and Işık-Güler (2007), her study goes into negative politeness strategies in an EFL context. To be more precise, the study of Kahraman (2013) aims at examining how teaching negative politeness strategies affects prospective English language teachers’ oral communication skills. As data collection instruments, both a discourse

completion test, administered as pre- and post-tests, and a written interview form were utilized to investigate the effects of ten-week treatment. The results revealed that the treatment process was beneficial to improving oral communication skills of the participants. Moreover, the participants stated their positive views about learning negative politeness strategies and it was suggested that negative politeness strategies could be integrated into the ELT curriculums and taught within certain oral communication courses.

Although, as utilized in Kahraman's (2013) study, discourse completion tests can be regarded as the most commonly used data collection instruments in the research studies predicated upon politeness theory, some other different tools have begun to emerge as well. For instance, Önalın and Çakır (2018) used the Discourse Evaluation Task (DET) to collect data, besides video-recorded role plays and open-ended oral interviews. DET is an instrument which specifically guides participants to evaluate sample responses given to a sample discursive extract, and then complete the given discourse according to their own understanding. Because it was aimed at exploring whether Turkish EFL learners' pragmatic language behaviour in formal complaint situations would be different from their speech act performances to those of native speakers or not, the data were analysed making comparisons between the productions and perceptions of native and Turkish speakers of English in terms of complaints. The findings revealed that there was a significant difference between native English speakers' and Turkish learners' production of complaints. Additionally, the results indicated a significant difference between native English speakers' and Turkish learners' perceptions of social appropriateness of direct and indirect complaints, and "age" was found to be a crucial factor affecting the pragmatic preferences made by Turkish learners of English.

It may be concluded that in the literature there are a variety of studies describing, reviewing and discussing Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory (Goldsmith, 2007; Mao, 1994; Locher & Watts, 2005; Wilson, Kim & Meischke, 1991), and certain research studies that combine the theory with the practical part of the language (De Ayala, 2001; Johnson, Roloff & Riffée, 2004; Kitamura, 2000; Westbrook, 2007). However, the research studies conducted within the Turkish language is relatively limited. Thus, reviewing politeness theory and style, discussing the related studies, and examining the use of politeness strategies and style differences emerged in the Turkish language, the present study contributes to the Turkish sociolinguistics literature.

#### 1. 4. Summary table for research studies on politeness theory and strategies

The research studies were presented in the previous heading, yet it was thought displaying the research studies within a summary table could be more effective. Thus, besides the studies previously discussed in detail, other empirical research studies were also included in the Table 1 with the aim of clarifying what had been available in the literature with regard to politeness theory and politeness strategies. Following studies were carried out to investigate different aspects of politeness and they have valuable results. However, recent studies in Turkish context are limited as presented through Table 1. For this reason, the current study is carried out.

**Table 1.** Summary table for the research studies on politeness theory and style differences

Name of the Study	Researchers (Year Published)	Aim(s)	Data Collection Tools	Findings
Politeness theory and computer-	Morand and Ocker (2003)	To explore how politeness theory may	Because it is a conceptual article,	In CMC research, politeness theory can be a

mediated communication: A sociolinguistic approach to analyzing relational messages		contribute to the role relations in computer-mediated communication	no data was collected.	useful tool. Technology has a prominent place in today's world, so it can also be utilized in CMC research and fostering individuals' knowledge and performance regarding politeness.
Universal politeness theory: Application to the use of Japanese honorifics	Fukada and Asato (2004)	To examine the use of Japanese honorifics as a phenomenon that could not be explained by politeness theory	Although there was not a specific data collection tool due to the argumentative nature of the study, discussion was led using five arguments and sample extracts.	Discernment politeness phenomenon should not be regarded as a separate phenomenon in the Japanese context.
Indirectness and politeness in Turkish-German bilingual and Turkish monolingual requests	Marti (2006)	To examine both the realisation and politeness perception of requests from the perspectives of Turkish monolingual speakers and Turkish-German bilingual returnees	A discourse completion test, including 10 different situations A politeness rating questionnaire	No pragmatic transfer was found. "As for overall directness in requests, no significant difference was found between the Turkish monolinguals and the Turkish-German bilinguals" (Marti, 2006, p. 1862). Turkish monolingual speakers preferred using direct strategies while Turkish-German bilingual speakers preferred indirect strategies.
Silence and politeness in intercultural communication in university seminars	Nakane (2006)	To explore how silence is used as a politeness strategy	Semi-structured interviews Questionnaire Field notes Video recordings	Silence was employed as a politeness strategy by the Japanese student participants in three different ways: as a strategy to maintain positive face, as a 'Don't do the FTA' strategy, and as an 'off-record' strategy. The lecturers perceived silence negatively.
Conceptualizing face and relational work in (im)politeness: Revelations from politeness lexemes and idioms in Turkish	Ruhi and Işık-Güler (2007)	To examine the conceptualization of face and related aspects of self in Turkish To present the implications of the conceptualization of face and the self in interaction in Turkish	The idioms derived from two root lexemes, i.e. <i>yüz</i> and <i>gönül</i> , in Turkish	Examining "the affective dimensions of self and communication" is crucial and investigating them will possibly contribute to other dimensions of self-presentation (Ruhi & Işık-Güler, 2007, pp. 708 – 709).
Student honorifics usage in conversations	Hudson (2011)	To investigate how students use or do not use honorifics in	12 conversations	The vast majority of the college students used honorifics.

with professors		Japanese conversations with professors		“Honorific usage might vary greatly within the same discourse as well as among individuals” (Hudson, 2011, p. 3689).
The Effects of Teaching Negative Politeness Strategies on Oral Communication Skills of Prospective EFL Teachers	Kahraman (2013)	To examine how teaching negative politeness strategies affects prospective English language teachers’ oral communication skills	Discourse completion pre- and post-tests A written interview form	The treatment process was beneficial to improving oral communication skills of the participants. The participants developed positive attitudes towards learning negative politeness strategies.
A comparative study on speech acts: Formal complaints by native speakers and Turkish learners of English	Önalın and Çakır (2018)	To examine Turkish EFL learners’ pragmatic language behavior in formal complaint situations by making comparisons with their speech act performances to those of native speakers	Discourse Evaluation Task (DET) Video-recorded role plays Open-ended oral interviews	A significant difference between native English speakers’ and Turkish learners’ production of complaints was found. There was a significant difference between native English speakers’ and Turkish learners’ perceptions of social appropriateness of direct and indirect complaints. “Age” was found to be an important factor affecting the pragmatic preferences made by Turkish learners of English.
Politeness strategies in Turkish and Persian: Compliments, good wishes and giving deference	Navaey and Bakııç (2018)	To analyse compliments, good wishes and giving deference as politeness strategies in the Turkish and Persian languages	Extracts taken from TV series and movies, representing spontaneous natural language use and daily conversations	Turkish and Persian languages share most similarities in using positive politeness strategies, especially in the expressions of good wishes. The negative politeness strategies predicated upon distance and strict hierarchy are employed more commonly by the speakers of Persian than those of Turkish.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Participants

The participants in this study are pre-service English language teachers. They are, in fact, preparatory class students enrolled in the Department of English Language Teaching at a state university in Turkey. 32 teacher candidates participated in the study. To analyse and interpret data collected through a discourse completion test comprehensibly, participants were asked 6 personal questions, so demographic information about the participants was gathered in detail. Respectively, the participants were supposed to give an answer to the following items:

Gender,

Educational background,

Parents' occupation and educational background,

The number of siblings, their marital status, occupations and educational background,

Hometown and where the family lives currently,

Whether he or she is living with the elderly now or he or she grew up in a family living together with the elderly.

When examining their responses, it is seen that the great majority of the participants are females (N=25). 24 of them graduated from Anatolian High School whereas 7 of them were graduated from either Anatolian Teacher Training High School or Regular High School, and one of them took her bachelor's degree in a different field previously. Regarding occupations and educational background of the parents, data can be summarized by stating that mothers are, to a great extent, housewives and did not get a college education. And, fathers' occupations vary from policeman to farmer. Only 4 of the participants have more than 5 siblings, and generally, all of the participants' siblings have got a high school or college education. However, there are also 3 participants whose siblings were graduated from primary school only. In terms of their responses to the last item in the questionnaire, it should be noted that most of the participants do not live with the elderly or have not lived previously but 5 participants reported that they grew up in a family living together with the elderly and 2 participants' families are living with the grandparents now. It should also be pointed out that what demographic data analysis revealed will be used while interpreting data, so no statistical analysis will be indicated regarding the participants.

## 2.2. Data collection instrument

There are various data collection instruments that can be used in sociolinguistics researches. And, how to collect data is highly crucial in sociolinguistics research studies. One basic data collection technique is to record conversations of individuals. Moreover, Kasper (2000) emphasizes that field notes, interviews and role-plays can be used to collect data in both sociolinguistics and pragmatics pieces of research as well. Similarly, Félix-Brasdefer (2010) examines the use of discourse completion tasks, role-plays and verbal reports in detail in his study and it is concluded that each instrument has both strengths and weaknesses but they can be used effectively in sociolinguistics studies.

In this study, data were collected by administering a discourse completion test (see Appendix A). Nurani (2009) discusses five types of discourse completion tests: classic format, dialogue construction, open item verbal response, open item free response construction and the new type of DCT developed by Billmyer and Varghese (2000). Actually, this new type is similar to the classic version but in the new type situational background is provided in detail. For this study, the classic format was utilized because the researchers aimed to indicate the situations as clearly as possible.

Four situations were written by the researchers considering the city in which the participants study and live currently. The city where they study and live is the smallest city in Turkey. Because both the participants and the researchers have been living in this city for two years, they have spent enough

time knowing how the original inhabitants who live in this city. For this reason, the situations were formed by taking socio-cultural factors into consideration.

### 2.3. Data analysis

In the present study, data were collected qualitatively and analysed following the steps presented in Creswell's (2012) book, entitled "Educational Research Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research". The data were first organized, then transcribed and analysed by hand. Both of the researchers adopted the following procedure suggested by Tesch (1990) and Creswell (2007) (as cited in Creswell, 2012, pp. 244-245):

Identifying text segments,

Placing a bracket around them,

Assigning a code word or phrase which exactly describes the text segment's meaning,

Making a list of all code words after coding all the data,

Grouping similar codes and looking for redundant codes,

Preparing a list of codes and checking the data once again to see whether or not new codes emerge,

Reducing the list of codes to get five to seven themes which can be defined as "similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database".

### 3. Findings and discussion

As it was mentioned previously, the data were collected through a discourse completion test with four cases, each of which reflects what the participants can encounter in their everyday lives. The participants were supposed to write three different responses for each case since it was aimed at exploring how their responses would differ according to their styles.

Firstly, a bus (*dolmuş*) case was represented. The participants read the following situation and gave an answer in consultative style, intimate style and formal style:

You get on a bus to go to school and you are carrying a lot of books. You are also exhausted. At first sight, it seems that there are no seats available but then you understand that one is occupying two seats. How do you tell this person that he or she is occupying two seats and you want to take a seat?

The participants answered this question in three different ways: as if they were talking to (i) a peer who they do not know, (ii) a friend that they know well and (iii) a teacher from the school. The first case is an example of Negative Face-Threatening Act because the hearer's freedom is threatened due to the possible questions to be asked by the interlocutor. More precisely, the person who occupies two seats does not think that his or her behaviour is inappropriate and he or she should let others take a seat without being asked at all. However, the one who asked for a seat threatens his or her freedom, so negative face of the hearer is threatened by the speaker. All the participants answered this first case considering status differences, context and their relationship with the hearer – that is to say, when using the intimate or informal style, they put emphasis on shared attitudes, values and solidarity, so a

positive politeness strategy is used because they are friends and know each other. The following three extracts demonstrate the use of positive politeness within this case:

Canım sana zahmet kayar mısın? Ben de oturayım. (Dear, can you move to the side seat? So I sit down.) (P3)

Kanka hele kay azıcık. (Buddy, move a little.) (P21)

Kanka ne yapisin, ne edisin? Hele gay *hele*. (Buddy, what do you do, how is it going? Move, move.) (P9)

Even though all three participants use a positive politeness strategy not to threaten the hearer's personal freedom, the ways they address their questions vary from one to the other. These variations can be explained by their gender, the city they come from and their family background. Participant 3 is a female whose father is a well-educated person working as an education inspector but the other two participants are males, whose families live in Eastern Anatolia Region, so it is clearly seen how gender and socio-cultural background affect the way individuals speak.

Analysis of how the participants addressed their questions while they are using the consultative style and the formal style revealed that negative politeness is emphasized in this case. The participants addressed their questions to the hearer by taking status differences and their relationship with this person into consideration, which can be displayed as follows:

Hocam müsaadenizle buraya oturabilir miyim? (Mr., if you'll excuse me, can I sit here?) (Use of formal style) (P11)

Hocam merhaba, yanınıza oturabilir miyim? (Hello Sir, can I sit next to you?) (Use of formal style) (P14)

İyi günler hocam, sakıncası yoksa yanınıza oturabilir miyim? (Good afternoon Mrs., would you mind if I sit next to you?) (Use of formal style) (P1)

Pardon, yana kayabilir misiniz? (Pardon me, could you move to the side seat?) (Use of consultative style) (P8)

Kusura bakmayın, yana kayar mısınız? (I am very sorry; can you move to the side seat?) (Use of consultative style) (P22)

Rica etsem yana kayar mısın? (Would you please move to the side seat?) (Use of consultative style) (P7)

As the extracts above indicate, while using the formal style, the participants pay attention to start the conversation by addressing the hearer with his or her title.

The second case takes place at a touristic destination. The speaker is supposed to ask the hearer whether or not he or she can take a photo of the speaker. The participants were, again, to write a response in three different ways by using the intimate style, the consultative style and the formal style. The analysis of the responses divulged similar findings to the previous case's results. When using the intimate style, the participants used positive politeness strategies as demonstrated in the following extracts:

İki dakika bir fotoğrafımızı çekebilir misin. (Take a photo of us in two minutes flat [in no time flat]) (P4)

Hele gel de bir fotoğrafımızı çek ya. (Come and take a photo of us.) (P23)

Kanki bir fotoğrafımızı çek. (Buddy, take a photo of us.) (P15)

Güzelim sana zahmet bir fotoğrafımızı *çekebilir misin?* (Sweetie, can you take a photo of us?) (P2)

In these extracts, forms of address should be emphasized. The participants of this study are young adults as it was stated previously, and such forms of address are commonly used by them. *Kanka*, *Kanki*, *Güzelim* are the examples reflecting that the interlocutors are close to each other or they know each other for a while. In terms of how the formal style and the consultative style are used within this case, it can be said that the findings are more surprising than the previous case's findings because the majority of the participants said that they could not ask the teacher whether he or she could take a photo of him or her. The following extracts display this situation clearly:

Soramam, utanırım. (I cannot ask. I feel shy.) (P10)

Asla sormam. (I never ask.) (P6)

Sormam. Öğretmen yerine bir öğrenci aramayı tercih ederim. (I do not ask. I would rather find a student than ask the teacher.) (P26)

The third case takes place at the hospital, the participants were supposed to warn a person entering the doctor's office without getting permission and awaiting the speaker's turn. Unlike the first two cases, in this case, the hearer's positive face is threatened because the speaker is supposed to warn or criticize the hearer, and so self-image of the hearer is threatened. The findings clarified that the participants were not shy about sharing their criticism with the others, except their superiors, as it is also demonstrated as follows:

Kusura bakmayın ama burada o kadar kişi sıra bekliyor ve siz bizim sıramızı ve hakkımızı çalıyorsunuz. Bir sonraki sefer lütfen bir etrafınıza bakın. (I am sorry to say but all these people here are waiting for their turn and you take our turn and right away. Please glance round you next time.) (Use of consultative style) (P20)

Sadece kendini düşünüp nasıl bu kadar bencil olabiliyorsun? Tek ihtiyacı olan sen değilsin ve herkes gibi sen de sıra beklemek zorundasın. (How can you be so selfish that you only think of yourself? You're not the only one who needs it, and like everyone else, you have to wait in line.) (Use of consultative style) (P22)

Kanka yapıyorsun içeride yarım saattir... Acelem var ya! (Buddy, what are you doing inside for half an hour?! I'm in a hurry!) (Use of intimate style) (P26)

Çok ayıp ama tatlım, biz burada saatlerdir bekliyoruz. (Fie, sweetie, we are waiting here for hours.) (Use of intimate style) (P27)

Hocaya hiçbir şey söylemezdim. (I do not say anything to the teacher.) (Use of formal style) (P27)

Bir şey demezdim hocaya, Hoca sonuçta... (I do not say anything to the teacher. You know... He is the teacher.) (Use of formal style) (P31)

When examining the participants' social, educational and family backgrounds, it is seen that no meaningful and logical relation was found between the responses of them and why they preferred not expressing their criticism to their superiors. Similarly, the last case is also an example of the positive face-threatening act. In this case, both the speaker and the hearer are travelling on a bus, the hearer is talking on the phone loudly and the hearer is supposed to suggest the hearer that he or she should speak silently or after getting off the bus. Since the hearer's personality or self-image is threatened by the speaker's warning or criticism, this case is explained as a positive face-threatening act. Considering the responses of the participants, it should be noted that they are able to express their criticism or annoyance to their peers without having difficulty at all whereas they generally refrain from commenting on their superiors' inappropriate behaviours or actions as the following extracts demonstrate:

Ya bi sus ya... Bir de seninle uğraşamam. (Hey, shut up... I can't deal also with you.) (Use of intimate style) (P31)

Bakar mısınız? Biraz sessiz konuşabilir misiniz? (Excuse me? Could you speak a little quietly?) (Use of consultative style) (P18)

Hocaya bir şey diyemezdim. (I can say nothing to the teacher.) (Use of formal style) (P12)

The findings of the present study are consistent with those of Önalın and Çakır's (2018) research study with regard to "age" factor because it was suggested by Önalın and Çakır that age affects the pragmatic preferences of individuals. Similarly, the findings of the current study revealed certain forms of address, e.g. *Kanka*, *Kanki*, *Tatlım*, *Güzelim*, *Aga* which young adults in Turkey generally use while communicating especially with their close friends. On the other hand, within both positive and negative face-threatening acts, they prefer using negative politeness strategies while interacting with their peers, with whom they are not familiar. They aim to have the hearer feel that they are not close to each other, so they emphasize the relational distance between each other. As Brown (2015) pointed out, employing negative politeness strategies when there is social distance between the interlocutors demonstrates a higher level of threat, so the speaker prefers using negative politeness strategies.

Addressing the hearer by using second person plural subject (i.e. *Siz*) and starting the conversation with certain words and expressions expressing politeness, e.g. *pardon*, *kusura bakmayın ama*, *acaba* clarify that the participants pay attention to the politeness strategies and levels of the face-threatening act when communicating with individuals who they are not acquainted with. The findings have also revealed that the participants are highly attentive and polite while they are addressing a question to their superiors, they are mindful of the status difference between them and their teachers. Accordingly, before requesting or asking something, they chose to greet the teacher (e.g. *Merhaba hocam, yanınız boş ise oturabilir miyim acaba?* [Hello teacher, can I sit next to you if it is empty?]).

#### 4. Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine politeness strategies and style differences emerged in the Turkish language. Participants of the study consisted of preparatory student of English Language Teaching department and they selected purposefully. The participants have been studied English for years and they expect to have a profession on it in the future. Researchers of the study aimed to investigate whether participants' target language has an impact on their mother tongue use pragmatically. A discourse completion test including four cases was prepared and administered to the participants. Moreover, it was also aimed to shed light on whether participants' family, educational and social backgrounds have a considerable effect on their choice of politeness strategies. Thus, demographic information about the participants was collected in detail as well.

Although there are basically four cases, the participants were supposed to write three responses in three styles: the intimate or informal style, the consultative style and the formal style, so each case took place in the same context but the participants needed to consider three different addresses. The results indicated that social and family backgrounds of the participants do not have a big influence on their responses – that is to say, regardless of their parents' occupations, the number of their siblings, educational background or marital status of them and whether they live with the elderly, they generally used similar politeness strategies.

However, the findings of the study emphasized the effect of age and gender on language. Because the participants are young adults who are 18 – 19 years old, the life stage at which they are now is highly

affected by social media tools, technology and English language as well. More precisely, they do not think and speak in the same way as the elderly or adults do. They have constructed different identities, and accordingly, they have specific forms of address, vocabulary and even abbreviations to be used while communicating with each other. Use of *kanka*, *tatlım*, *aga* clearly demonstrates the effect of age on language. Additionally, although the literature suggests that gender influences the distribution of social roles and economic and social activities one gets access to and these activities, in their turn, influence language use, in this study no variation regarding gender variable has been found out. In only one case, in which the speaker is supposed to warn the hearer not to await his or her turn, females are more attentive, that is to say, they formed longer sentences than males did to explain that the hearer did something wrong or inappropriate. Conversely, males chose to direct the message more directly or did not say anything at all. The results showed that participants' target language, namely English, does not affect their Turkish language use in a given situation.

It can be concluded that this study contributed to the relevant literature by revealing what English language teacher candidates use to express their politeness in three different styles. However, further research can be conducted with more participants utilizing different data collection instruments.

### References

- Açıkalkın, I. (1995). *A Linguistic Analysis of Turkish Medical Language and Doctor Patient Communication* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from The Council of Higher Education Thesis Centre.
- Billmyer, K. & Varghese, M. (2000). Investigating instrument-based pragmatic variability: Effects of enhancing discourse completion tests. *Applied Linguistics*, 21(4), 517-552.
- Brown, P. (2015). Politeness and language. In *The International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences (IESBS)*, (2nd ed.) (pp. 326-330). Elsevier.
- Brown, P., Levinson, S. C., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: some universals in language usage* (Vol. 4). Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Burns, L., Marra, M., & Holmes, J. (2001). Women's humour in the workplace: a quantitative analysis. *Australian Journal of Communication*, 28(1), 83.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- De Ayala, S. P. (2001). FTAs and Erskine May: Conflicting needs?—Politeness in question time. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 33(2), 143-169.
- Félix-Brasdefer, J. C. (2010). Data collection methods in speech act performance. *Speech act performance: Theoretical, empirical and methodological issues*, 26, 41.
- Fukada, A., & Asato, N. (2004). Universal politeness theory: application to the use of Japanese honorifics. *Journal of pragmatics*, 36(11), 1991-2002.
- Goldsmith, D. J. (2007). Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. In B. Whaley & W. Samter (Eds.). *Explaining communication: contemporary theories and exemplars* (pp. 219-236). Mahwah NJ, Erlbaum.
- Ide, S. (1989). Formal forms and discernment: Two neglected aspects of universals of linguistic politeness. *Multilingua-journal of cross-cultural and interlanguage communication*, 8(2-3), 223-248.
- Holmes, J. (2013). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. New York: Routledge.

- Hudson, M. E. (2011). Student honorifics usage in conversations with professors. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(15), 3689-3706.
- Johnson, D. I., Roloff, M. E., & Riffée, M. A. (2004). Politeness theory and refusals of requests: Face threat as a function of expressed obstacles. *Communication Studies*, 55(2), 227-238.
- Kahraman, S. (2013). *The Effects of Teaching Negative Politeness Strategies on Oral Communication Skills of Prospective EFL Teachers* (Master of Arts Thesis). Retrieved from The Council of Higher Education Thesis Centre.
- Kasper, G. (2000). Data collection in pragmatics research. *Culturally speaking: Managing rapport through talk across cultures*, 316-341.
- Kedveř, A. (2013). Face threatening acts and politeness strategies in summer school application calls. *Jezikoslovje*, 14(2-3), 431-444.
- Kitamura, N. (2000). Adapting Brown and Levinson's 'politeness' theory to the analysis of casual conversation. In *Proceedings of ALS2k, the 2000 Conference of the Australian Linguistic Society* (pp. 1-8).
- Kocaman, A. (1992). Preliminaries to the study of stylistic scales in Turkish. *Dilbilim 20. Yıl Yazıları* 183-190.
- Locher, M. A., & Watts, R. J. (2005). Politeness theory and relational work. *Journal of Politeness Research. Language, Behaviour, Culture*, 1(1), 9-33.
- Mao, L. R. (1994). Beyond politeness theory: 'Face' revisited and renewed. *Journal of pragmatics*, 21(5), 451-486.
- Marti, L. (2006). Indirectness and politeness in Turkish-German bilingual and Turkish monolingual requests. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 38(11), 1836-1869.
- Matsumoto, Y. (1988). Reexamination of the universality of face: Politeness phenomena in Japanese. *Journal of pragmatics*, 12(4), 403-426.
- Morand, D. A., & Ocker, R. J. (2003, January). Politeness theory and computer-mediated communication: A sociolinguistic approach to analyzing relational messages. In *System Sciences, 2003. Proceedings of the 36th Annual Hawaii International Conference on* (pp. 10-pp).
- Nakane, I. (2006). Silence and politeness in intercultural communication in university seminars. *Journal of pragmatics*, 38(11), 1811-1835.
- Navaey, A. A., & Bakıć, S. (2018). Politeness strategies in Turkish and Persian: compliments, good wishes and giving deference. *Electronic Turkish Studies*, 13(5), 1-16.
- Önalın, O., & Çakır, A. (2018). A comparative study on speech acts: formal complaints by native speakers and Turkish learners of English. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 4(2), 239-259.
- Ruhi, Ş., & Işık-Güler, H. (2007). Conceptualizing face and relational work in (im) politeness: Revelations from politeness lexemes and idioms in Turkish. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39(4), 681-711.
- Nurani, L. M. (2009). Methodological issue in pragmatic research: Is discourse completion test a reliable data collection instrument? *Jurnal Sosioteknologi*, 8(17), 667-678.
- Tesch, R. (1990). *Qualitative research: Analysis types and software tools*. Bristol, PA: Falmer.
- Wardhaugh, R. (2006). *An Introduction to sociolinguistic (5th Edition)*. Australia: Blackwell.
- Wardhaugh, R. (2010). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Westbrook, L. (2007). Chat reference communication patterns and implications: applying politeness theory. *Journal of Documentation*, 63(5), 638-658.

Wilson, S. R., Kim, M. S., & Meischke, H. (1991). Evaluating Brown and Levinson's politeness theory: a revised analysis of directives and face. *Research on Language & Social Interaction*, 25(1-4), 215-252.

Wolfram, W., & Schilling-Estes, N. (1998). *American English: Dialects and Variation (Language in Society)*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.