

# LANGUAGE USE, INTERACTIONS, AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS: ARE THERE ANY CONSIDERATIONS TAKEN BY CHILDREN WHEN MAKING REQUESTS TO THEIR INTERLOCUTORS?

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## LANGUAGE USE, INTERACTIONS, AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS: ARE THERE ANY CONSIDERATIONS TAKEN BY CHILDREN WHEN MAKING REQUESTS TO THEIR INTERLOCUTORS?

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### **Abstract**

According to literature, a child's request is always addressed to a specific person or group of people. To our knowledge, however, studies on language use, interactions, and social dimensions in relation to request making to an interlocutor are uncommon in the Indonesian context; therefore, we sought to describe the considerations taken by children when making requests. Forty children between the ages of 6 and 10 took part in this qualitative study. We collected data using observation and field notes. The collected data were subsequently analyzed using an interactive model. The findings indicate that the majority of children's requests are directed toward interlocutors who are classified as having an extremely close relationship. In contrast, children never make direct requests to interlocutors classified as quite distant or extremely distant. The findings also indicate that requests made to interlocutors with a higher social status than children use a particular verbal form based on the nature of the request and the implied context. In contrast to reality, requests made to interlocutors with a lower social status are more likely to be made directly. It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to pragmatic and speech-related theories, as well as to improvements in language education based on a communicative and contextual approach that returns language to its primary function as a tool for communication and places language learning in a meaningful context.

**Keywords:** *children; language use; social aspects; interactions; requesting strategies*

### **1. Introduction**

As stated in literature, a child's request is always directed at a specific individual or group of individuals. Children's and interlocutors' levels of closeness and social status are both factors in their relationship status (Chang and Ren, 2020). Children's approach to making a request is heavily influenced by their parents' different relationship statuses (Abdullaeva, 2021; Cai, Sun, and Zhao, 2021; Hymes 1989; Sperry, Sperry, and Miller, 2019). Thus, the speaker-interlocutors relationship can take the form of an associative or dissociative relationship, where the former refers to cooperation, accommodation (dissipation), and assimilation in order to maximize the productivity result expected by both

the speaker and the interlocutors, and the latter refers to hatred, selfishness, and disunity (conflict) (Portner, Pak, and Zanuttini, 2019; Salman, Al-Saidi, and Khalaf, 2022).

## 2. Literature Review

In this study, the illocutionary focus demands that the focus be more on the associative interaction because illocution requires more priority on the cooperation act in order to achieve the language goal, which are obtaining something from the interlocutor and keeping the communication running smoothly. As a result, there is a social dimension to the variation in language use in the interaction. These social dimensions include four scales: (1) social distance scale dimensions; (2) social status scale dimensions; (3) formalistic scale dimensions; and (4) adjective and referential scale dimensions (Duff, 2019; Holmes, 1992, 2017; Pescaroli and Alexander, 2018).

The social status in relation to aspects of age, gender or sex, individual personalities and social classes and structures as well as ethnicity is also important (Grusky, 2019), and not all of these aspects are relevant and directly related to the study of request strategies. Due to the fact that requests are rarely linked to specific characteristics like gender, personality, or ethnicity of speakers and interlocutors, these factors were not considered in this research. Because of this, the study's focus on social aspects is on the roles that individuals play within their families and communities, as well as the speaker's age in relation to the interlocutor. The speaker's social "power" and "position," rather than the illocutions, determine his or her role in a family or community. A distinction is made between social and formal 'power' and 'position' here. As an illustration, consider the case of a child who owns all of the toy cars that he or she uses to play with his or her friends and thus has complete control over the toys. When it comes to toy cars, the child actually has more "power" and "position" than his or her playmates, and he or she is at the top. Children also have less "power" and "position" when playing with something that belongs to their playmates and is therefore in the lowest social strata (Holmes, 1992, 2017; Insani, Rusminto, and Ariyani, 2019; Leech, 2016). Therefore, the purpose of the study is to describe the considerations of the interlocutors that children encountered when making requests. It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to pragmatic and speech-related theories, as well as to improvements in teaching and learning language according to a communicative and contextual approach that returns language to its primary function as a communication tool and places language learning in a meaningful context.

## 3. Research Method

Forty children between the ages of 6 and 10 were surveyed using a qualitative approach (Cresswell, 2013; Leavy, 2017), and the data were collected from their comments. Observation and field notes were used for data collection. Using interactive model analysis, the data analysis was conducted. In this interactive model analysis, the activities of data collection, data presentation, data reduction, and conclusion are continuous and intertwined (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014).

## 4. Results and Discussion

Children give careful consideration to two major aspects of the interlocutor when proposing a request to the interlocutor, according to the findings. The two main points are

the closeness of the child's relationship with their interlocutor and the interlocutor's social status relative to the child.

#### 4.1 Aspect of Closeness Relationship

The closeness relationship referred to in this study refers to the degree of familiarity and closeness between child and interlocutor. The familiarity and closeness of this relationship are determined by the intensity of the child's relationship with the interlocutor. To facilitate discussion, the closeness relationships in this study are divided into four categories: extremely close relationships, quite close relationships, relationships at a considerable distance, and extremely distant relationships.

##### 4.1.1 Extremely Close Relationship Classification

Children are more likely to address their requests to interlocutors with the relationship classification of extremely close relationship. This is due to the fact that the psychological distance between the child and the interlocutor is very small. A relationship feels more appropriate and has the right to extend a request to an interlocutor with the classification of extremely close relationship than to an interlocutor with another relationship classification.

Based on an analysis of the data, it was determined that children proposing a request to an interlocutor who was classified as having an extremely close relationship used all verbal forms, including both direct and indirect requests. Children's use of direct requests, a type of request that tends to be less considerate of etiquette principles, is surprisingly effective. It corresponds to the fact that the degree of politeness required in communication is inversely proportional to the closeness or familiarity of the relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor. In other words, the closer a speaker is to his or her interlocutor, the less politeness is required when communicating. The greater the distance between the speaker and interlocutor, the greater the need for good manners and conduct when communicating.

In addition, data analysis reveals that when children propose a request for something that falls under the "usual" category (rather than a request for a special category) to an interlocutor with an extremely close relationship classification, they tend to use a direct request form, which is in line with previous findings (Keizer, Helmerhorst, and van Rijn-van Gelderen, 2019; Steinbach, 2019). Here is a sample of the subject's data.

- (1) I : I'm thirsty, Dad, and I'd like some water. I'm a father (approaching the father while visiting a family in Surabaya).  
E : Take a step inside and speak with Grandma on your own.  
I : Daadd... (being hesitant).  
E : It's all right.

Moreover, when children are confronted with an interlocutor who is classified as having an extremely close relationship with them and a lower social status, and the requests made are 'ordinary' (not extraordinary), the child frequently uses direct, authoritarian requests towards the target. Here is a sample of the data.

- (2) B : Take care of the playthings, Ester! (while making a way to the kitchen after having finished playing).

- Es : Help me, Bro  
B : Hold on, let me get a drink first.  
Es : Be prompt about it, Bro!

With "unusual" or "special" requests, however, the use of direct request form with arguments to the interlocutor with an extremely close relationship classification is common. These requests that fall under the "unusual" category may be associated with some of the following: (1) the cost of the requested item is high, (2) the request is prohibited or becomes a ban, (3) the request is unusual or out of the ordinary, and (4) the request is a follow-up to a request that receives rejection responses from the interlocutor. Here are instances of it.

- (3) B : I've been wanting a remote control car for a while, and I beg you, Dad, to get it for me when you get the chance (while playing with a toy car).  
E : That is expensive, Son  
B : I am well aware of that; consequently, when you have spare cash on hand, I would appreciate it very much if you could purchase one for me.  
E : Then you should give up buying snacks. Put some of that spending money away!
- (4) I : Dad, I have a ton of homework to do, and there is also an exam tomorrow. I am not going to take a nap, Dad (while standing next to the father, unzipping a bookbag)  
E : First things first, you need to get some sleep, and then you can start studying when you wake up.  
I : Sorry, Dad, but there just isn't enough time.  
E : I have no doubt that there are plenty.
- (5) B : Look, Dad, it is already past half past seven! I want to go for a ride on the motorcycle, Dad (while taking a schoolbag)  
E : Even if you walk, there is enough time for everything. Move quickly.  
B : Dad, it's too late. I have no desire to hurry.  
R : Then, Dad, you should ride the motorcycle.  
E : Please take the key, on the buffet!
- (6) A : Please, Gus, hand over the Silverqueen. (sitting close to B.)  
B : What? (while staying away from A, taking away the Silverqueen)  
A : I believe one of your teeth is hurting. You have experienced a recurrence of it.  
B : That's fine!  
A : Let's make a deal with my Go-Go, shall we?  
B : I am warning you, do not make any more requests for it!

"The remote control car" as in the expression data (3) is a special thing for a child to ask his father for; "No napping" (expression data 4) is something prohibited by the interlocutor; "take out to the school with motorcycle" (expression data 5) is an unusual or rare thing; "Let's exchange with my Go-Go" (expression data 6) is a second request after the first request (silverqueen) was denied by the interlocutor. Even though the relationship between the child and the interlocutor falls into the category of extremely close, the child

chooses to use a direct request form with argument when proposing requests about something in that data context.

As a result of data analysis, it is also known that all indirect requisition forms are used by children to propose requests to interlocutors with a classification of extremely close relationship. The application of this indirect request form is influenced by the following factors and objectives. (1) There is uncertainty regarding the legitimacy of the request. Such skepticism stems from factors that make it impossible to satisfy children's requests, such as the high price, inappropriate circumstances, or inappropriate habits (example 7). (2) A child must be informed of the underlying condition underlying the request (example 8). (3) to convince the interlocutors of the legitimacy of the request (example 9). (4) to point out the child's item's lack of value in relation to his or her request (example 10). (5) Insinuate to the interlocutor a request made by the children. Its primary objective is to avoid open conflict with the interlocutor (example 11). (6) When making requests, create a humorous, joyful, and pleasant atmosphere. With such an amusing and pleasant atmosphere, it is hoped that a child's relationship with his former interlocutor can be preserved (example 12). (7) have a pessimistic outlook on something he or she requests. This occurs when a child is confronted with a helpless situation or condition pertaining to a request (example 13). (8) include others in his or her request. The inclusion of another person in relation to the child's request is intended to demonstrate to the interlocutor that there is support for the request or that the inclusion of others is an appropriate part of the request (example 14). This request is typically accompanied by a description of the child's unpleasant experiences in relation to a previous request (example 15). (10) request something that should be delivered only under specific ideal conditions that allow a child to make the request (example 16). Here are some examples of data.

- (7) B : Dad, would you let me play with the bike right now? (occupying the seat to the right of the father)  
 E : In the middle of such a scorching day, no way!  
 B : In the evening, I have a private lesson scheduled. Playing is not possible for me. Okay, Dad? I am playing at the venue that is not too hot.  
 E : It's fine, but only for the next few moments. Leave for home at twelve o'clock.
- (8) B : When are you going to Jakarta again? (whilst intently observing the children's toy vehicles in the store)  
 E : I have no idea at this point. What's the matter?  
 B : This toy race car is not yet in my possession.  
 E : I see. When I go to Jakarta, I always pick up a new toy car for you to play with.
- (9) A : I only just now realized that the frame of my glasses looks terrible, Mom (while watching the glass frame).  
 R : Can you show me? No, it still looks great.  
 A : If my father had a lot of money, I would spend it on getting a new frame for my glasses.  
 R : Okay, but not now. It's still great even after all this time.

#### 4.1.2 Quite Close Relationship Classification

In contrast to requests made to interlocutors with a classification of extremely close relationship, the child request productivity to interlocutors with a classification of quite close relationship is low, as is the variety of verbal forms used. Children prefer indirect request forms over direct request forms when proposing a request to an interlocutor with this relationship classification. This fact is in line with what has been stated in the literature that higher or lower status of interlocutors is taken into consideration by children (Annan, 2022; Hubscher, Garufi, and Prieto, 2019; Ren, 2019).

Direct requests on the target are used by the children to propose a request to the interlocutor with quite close relationship classification when presented by the following: (1) something that the child asked for is something the child is entitled to, that is something that belonged to the child that is worn or borrowed by his or her interlocutor and (2) the child's social status is higher than the interlocutor. Here are the examples.

- (9) B : Give it back to me my remote-controlled car, Uncle?) (getting closer to the uncle who had been playing with the remote-controlled car).  
Y : Please wait a moment, my love, I'm still giving it a shot. The actual vehicle, as opposed to the remote control version, is more challenging to operate.  
B : If you continue to hit it in such a careless manner, it will eventually become damaged.  
Y : Ha ha ha, I just realized how difficult it is, and it is!
- (10) B : Kak Patris, bring my bike out) (while combing the hair).  
P : Right now?  
B : Yes, I want to play with my bike right now. please.  
P : Alright. You wait outside!

In addition, similar to requests directed to interlocutors with extremely close relationship classifications, children use direct requests with arguments or justifications when requesting something that falls into the special and unusual category. In addition, it is used to clarify or follow up on previously made requests. Here is the instance.

- (11) B : (Uncle Yok, my head is killing me!) (while holding the head).  
Y : To what end? You don't sleep during the day, do you? You never do anything but engage in play.  
B : Taking the bus to get back is such a miserable experience. I can vomit.  
Y : It's so embarrassing!  
B : Please take me for a ride in your car, Uncle.  
Y : Ah, I see, hahaha. Tell mom and dad first!

In contrast, the subtle variations of requests used by children to propose requests to interlocutors with relatively close relationship classifications are not excessive. Four types of indirect request modes are used by children to request the interlocutor with quite close relationships, according to an analysis of the data. The following are examples of data obtained using four indirect requests.

- (12) I : Monti, can you make scrambled egg? (approaching Monti in the kitchen).  
M : I can, of course. That's easy!  
I : Give me a piece of that, all right?

- M : Okay, wait outside!
- (13) I : Patris is talented when it comes to drawing (while carrying sketchbook behind his back).
- P : Indeed, there is something there!
- I : Um, draw me a scene that includes a house!
- P : Oh no, the classroom teacher is going to be very upset with you!
- I : No, no. I'll just go ahead and copy! It is not going to count as one of my assignments!

#### 4.1.3 Relationships at a Considerable Distance Classification

Along with the distance level of the closeness relationship between the child and the interlocutors they encountered, the child's request productivity and variety of verbal forms decrease. Based on the outcome of the data analysis, it has been determined that there are only five copies of the child request data addressed to the interlocutor with the classification of a distant relationship. No data utilizes direct requests. All demand data addressed to an interlocutor with a relatively distant relationship are classified using an indirect request (Ronan, 2022; Webman, 2019), with two data using an indirect request with an inquiry mode and three data using an indirect request with an involvement mode. Here is an instance:

- (14) A : Please, Uncle Dju, may I have some flowers?) (making a way to Uncle Djuari).
- PD : Yes, please for what?
- A : For a cooking game with my friends.
- PD : Alright, pick them on your own!

#### 4.1.4 Extremely Distant Relationship Classification

Interlocutors with extremely distant relationship classification are previously unknown distant family members and people completely unknown to the child (e.g., interlocutors in terminals, public buses, etc.) who have the time to communicate with the child. From all the collected data, it is known that there are only two instances of child requests made to interlocutors classified as having an extremely distant relationship. Both sets of information are presented using an indirect request that involves another individual. Here is an illustration of this data.

- (15) I : I'm thirsty, Dad, and I'd like some water. I'm a father (approaching the father while visiting a family in Surabaya).
- E : Take a step inside and speak with Grandma on your own.
- I : Grandma, my dad asked me to get some water to drink.
- ES : All right, you can find the water on the table. The glass is right here. You should handle it on your own.

#### 4.2 Social Status Aspects

Compared to the interlocutors, the social status referred to in this study is primarily determined by individual positions and roles within the family or community. In some instances, this aspect of social status is also associated with the age of the child relative to the interlocutors. In contrast, gender, personality, and dominance are not considered because they lack sufficient relevance to the study.



According to data analysis, in addition to the closeness of the relationship with the interlocutor, which is the most important aspect of the relationship that children consider when proposing requests, the social status of the interlocutor that is compared with the children is also the most important factor. This is seen in light of the different types of data requests, both in terms of quality and context, that children with different social statuses make to their interlocutors (Chang and Ren, 2020; Matthews, Biney, and Abbot-Smith, 2018).

Children are more circumspect when addressing requests to individuals with a higher social status. The use of verbal forms of requests in accordance with the circumstances and conditions under which it operated demonstrates this. In other words, children are likely to use all verbal forms to propose a request to an interlocutor with a higher social status, given their situation and condition. For instance, if a child wishes to make a request to an interlocutor with a classification of extremely close relationship, he or she must use a direct request form, which is directed at the target. To make a request that is likely to be elicited by unfavorable circumstances and conditions, the child instead employs an indirect form of request with a feeling mode.

In contrast, requests made to an interlocutor with a lower social status tend to be carefree. Therefore, children frequently use direct requests on targets. Even in some instances, direct requests are made in a more authoritative manner. This is a sample of the data.

- (16) B : Kak Patris, bring my bike out) (while combing the hair).  
P : Right now?  
B : Yes, I want to play with my bike right now. please.  
P : Alright. You wait outside!

## 5. Conclusion

The majority of children's requests are directed at interlocutors with the classification of extremely close relationship. Children use all verbal forms and their usage modes when making requests to their interlocutors. It differs significantly from the request made for interlocutors with other relationship types. Although requests addressed to an interlocutor with a relatively close relationship classification are still colored by the use of two verbal forms, direct and indirect request, productivity and variation are limited. When the child has a higher social status than the interlocutor and the object of the request belongs to the child, a direct request is utilized. In contrast, children never make a direct request to an interlocutor with a relationship classification of quite distant or extremely distant. The findings of the study also indicate that requests made to interlocutors with a higher social status than children use a specific verbal form based on the nature of the request and the context it implies. In contrast to actuality, requests made to interlocutors with a lower social status are likely to be made in a direct manner. Even in some instances, the target is directly requested in an authoritative manner.

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# LANGUAGE USE, INTERACTIONS, AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS: ARE THERE ANY CONSIDERATIONS TAKEN BY CHILDREN WHEN MAKING REQUESTS TO THEIR INTERLOCUTORS?

GRADEMARK REPORT

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