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An Investigation on the Sociolinguistic Competence of English Language Teacher Trainees: A Comparative Study on Native and Non-Native English Speakers[1]

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to investigate sociolinguistic abilities of Turkish senior students of ELT departments in comparison to native speakers of English. Fifty Turkish and twenty-five American students participated in the study. The study was carried out in two aspects: (1) The differences of refusal and complaint strategies and (2) how their performances were perceived by a native interlocutor for the same social situations with two variables of interlocutors: higher – equal, familiar – unfamiliar. The data were collected qualitatively and quantitatively by means of two tools; a DCT involving 6-paired situations with two interlocutors, in total 12 items, separated as 3 refusal and 3 complaint situations was used for the qualitative analysis. The responses of all participants for each pair were coded, analysed and compared in SPSS program. Quantitative analysis was done by a communicative rating scale. An American rater graded Turkish students' responses according to the 5-point scale to assess their performances in sociocultural and sociolinguistic criteria. The results showed that Turkish EFL learners could use a range of speech act strategies, but they deviate from native speakers in content. Also, it was seen that they lacked some sociolinguistic and sociocultural knowledge that might cause sociopragmatic failure.

Key Words: Sociolinguistic competence, speech acts, complaints, refusals, discourse completion tasks.

1. Introduction

Sociolinguistic competence is one of the pillars of communicative competence and a component of *pragmatic competence* which also includes linguistic repertoire to use language functions, known as *speech acts* such as requests, apology, complaints, compliments, invitations, thanking, etc., appropriately in a social situation (Canale & Swain, 1983). Tarone and Swain (1995) define sociolinguistic competence as the ability of the members of a speech community to adapt their speech to the context in which they find themselves. However, developing sociolinguistic competence in a second or foreign language is not as easy as in native language because cultural rules of speaking change greatly from one society to another; in other words, what is appropriate to say in one culture may be completely inappropriate in another culture in the same situation. The learners generally do

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not know these rules and use the rules of their native culture while communicating in the foreign language. This process may result in misunderstandings between the speech participants, and cause serious breakdowns in communication, which is known as *pragmatic failure* (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1993; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987; Thomas, 1983; Wolfson, 1989).

A number of cross cultural investigations of speech acts designed to measure learners' sociolinguistic and pragmatic abilities in the target language showed a significant difference between native speakers' and language learners' speech act performances confirming that pragmatic failure is highly possible among speakers from different cultures (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1993). What is interesting about the results of these cross-sectional studies is that learners can provide similar speech act realization strategies as native speakers, regardless of their proficiency level. They only differ from native speakers in their lexical and structural preferences to apply these strategies.

Furthermore, most of these studies have been carried on ESL speakers but there is little research on sociolinguistic abilities of EFL learners who study English far away from its culture. In Turkey, a few studies and MA theses have been submitted on pragmatic competence of Turkish EFL learners, but they are not enough in number to provide an accumulation of literature on interlanguage pragmatics in Turkey.

The present study also differs from those studies in that it does not only focus on one single aspect of speech acts. The focus is on both how Turkish EFL speakers are different from native speakers in their speech act strategies in similar situations for different hearers and how they modify the face-effects of their utterances. Moreover, how these strategies are perceived by native speakers will be another aspect to be analyzed in this study. Therefore, this study is designed to understand the sociolinguistic competence of 4th grade Turkish ELT students in responding to various social situations and to see whether they can vary their speech according to the social distance and status of the hearer as well as being polite in both situations. To achieve this main goal, the research will be aimed at finding answers to the following questions:

Q1: How do Turkish EFL speakers deviate from the norms produced by native English speakers in their productions of the speech act sets of refusal and complaint in terms of variation in their preferences of strategies depending on the social distance or status of the hearer?

Q2: How are the responses of the non-native speakers to refusal and complaint situations perceived by native speakers socioculturally?

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Speech Acts

Speech acts play a vital role as a means of defining what sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence refers in cross cultural communication. Successful communication, whether within a culture or between people of different cultures, requires an understanding of the meaning of speech acts within a community as well as the ability to interpret the meaning of speakers' uses of different linguistic forms.

2.1.1 Speech Act of Refusals

One of the speech acts which have the tendency to cause communication breakdowns is the speech act of refusal. They are recognized as face-threathening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987) because the speaker tries to say `no` directly or indirectly to engage in an act initiated by an interlocutor and pragmatic failure is highly possible when the speaker cannot use an appropriate level of directness, and the refused person is offended.

Interlanguage Pragmatics has provided many contrastive studies of refusal strategies contributing to understand the classification and cultural variation of refusal strategies (Bardovi – Harlig & Hartford, 1991; Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990). The major contribution was done by Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990 who proposed a taxonomy of refusal strategies. In their study, which was carried out with a DCT and applied to 20 Japanese native speakers and 20 Japanese & 20 American English speakers to assess pragmatic transfer, they found evidence of pragmatic transfer from Japanese in the sequencing of semantic formulas, the frequency of semantic formulas and the content of semantic formulas.

2.1.2 Speech act of Complaints

Complaints are another face-threathening speech act which "a speaker expresses displeasure or annoyance-censure- as a reaction to a past or ongoing action, the consequences of which are perceived by the speaker as affecting her unfavorably" as defined by Olstain and Weinbach (1993, p. 108). They might be offensive or even destroy the relationship. It is difficult for the speaker to choose between uttering his/her feelings or keeping the harmony.

Several cross-cultural studies on complaint strategies have been carried out including the studies of Murpy and Neu (1996), Olstain and Weinbach (1993), and House and Kasper (1981). A general finding of these studies is that proficiency is a factor in the severity and length of the complaints. Lower level speakers are less offensive and face-threathening than advanced speakers. Another general finding is that the complaint patterns are changed according to the social distance or status of the hearer. While talking to a person who has equal or lower-status in the relationship, more direct complaints are preferred whereas indirect complaints are more common with a socially-higher class.

2.2 Studies on Measuring Sociolinguistic Competence

After the advent of communicative approaches to language teaching, researchers have concentrated on finding ways of testing the components of communicative competence including learners` sensitivity to sociolinguistic appropriateness.

As a large-scale project using multitrait - multimethod analysis to assess sociolinguistic competence of non-native speakers, The Development of Bilingual Proficiency Project (Harley, Allen, Cummins & Swain, 1990) was conducted to determine whether the traits hypothesized as key components of bilingual proficiency -grammatical, discourse and sociolinguistic competence-, could be established empirically. The results showed that the differences between the formal and informal situations in the responses of French immersion students were smaller than native speakers. Subjects were found to be more likely to use formal markers in both formal and informal situations.

Blum-Kulka et al. 's (1989) Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) was one of the most important studies set up to examine cross-cultural and intra-lingual variation in two speech acts - requests and apologies. They attempted to compare the realization modes of two specific speech acts in seven different languages and language varieties and have provided a rich source of data on cross-cultural pragmatics as well as developing a well-tested methodology, involving the use of discourse completion tests. The findings of this project provided insights into the differences and similarities between the speech act productions of native and non-native speakers who come from different cultural backgrounds. Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) investigated and compared apology and complaint productions of intermediate and advanced learners of Hebrew. Similarly, Eisenstein & Bodman (1993) investigated expression of gratitude used by native and non-native speakers of American English who come from various linguistic backgrounds. Non-native speakers were found to have certain difficulties in adjusting complex linguistic forms to certain contexts. That is, language learners' use of gratitude expressions appeared to be culture-bound.

Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) studied pragmatic and grammatical awareness in two groups of EFL and ESL classes with two levels of each as high- and low-proficiency by means of videotaped scenarios in typical interactions. They found that ESL and EFL learners did not show the same degree of awareness towards grammatical and pragmatic issues. There were clear differences between learning settings (EFL - ESL) and between proficiency levels (high – low) in their responses. The ESL groups gave significantly higher scores on pragmatic appropriateness judgments than did the EFL groups while grammatical errors had higher ratings from EFL groups. Thus, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) attributed the deficit of pragmatic competence of EFL speakers to possible lack of input and overemphasis on grammatical issues.

In Turkey, there are also some researches on speech act performances of Turkish EFL learners. Akinci-Akkurt (2007) investigated pragmatic awareness of Turkish EFL learners. Native speakers of English and Turkish EFL learners were compared from the aspect of the choice of complaint strategies. The study elicited judgments of appropriateness and acceptability of various complaint formulations in two different situations the context of one of which is formal and the other informal. The findings from this study indicate that aspects of complaints may cause difficulties for TEFL learners. This study suggested the need to raise their pragmatic awareness of Turkish EFL learners regarding the use of complaint strategies in particular contexts.

Doğançay Aktuna and Kamışlı (1997) examined pragmatic variation across Turkish and American English in the speech act of chastisement to determine occurrence of pragmatic transfer in the interlanguage of Turkish ESL learners. Data was collected from role plays of participants and results indicated both similarities and difference in the groups in the choice of strategies for dealing with the same speech act. They concluded that advanced ESL learners could diverge from target language norms, indicating a lack of sociolinguistic competence in that language.

Kılıçkaya's (2010) research investigated the pragmatic knowledge of Turkish EFL students in using certain request strategies through a type of DCT. The results showed that the EFL students in this study had the linguistic means in order to operate pragmatically in various contexts while requesting. However, their success in the use of the request strategies in situations requiring certain level of politeness was relatively not satisfactory. He suggested that the results can be closely related with learning contexts and textbook contents.

3. Method

The present study applied both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Firstly, content analysis was carried out for the analysis of the data collected by a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). Then qualitative results were obtained through the coding of the data and assessing communicative ability by a rating scale.

3.1. Participants

The data of the present study was collected from two different groups of randomly-selected participants consisting of 50 advanced Turkish EFL learners and 25 native speakers of English who study in large-sized state universities in Turkey and the USA, respectively.

3.2. Data Collection

In the present study, two data collection methods were used. Firstly, a discourse completion task was applied for data elicitation from the participants and then discourse completion tasks were rated by two native speakers by means of a rating scale.

3.2.1 Discourse Completion Task

The main instrument of the study for the first research question is a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) which is a data elicitation method commonly used in the field of Interlanguage Pragmatics. It is defined as a written questionnaire containing short descriptions of several situations with a space -and sometimes including a dialogue- for the production of the target speech act being studied (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). DCTs became one of the major instruments in the most important studies of speech acts such as requests (Blum-Kulka, 1982), complaints (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993), refusals (Takahashi & Beebe, 1987), apologies (Cohen & Olshtain, 1983), compliments (Billmyer, 1990), and many others.

The DCT used in this research was mostly developed by the researcher. Views of experts from the field were also taken on the appropriateness and quality of the test. The DCT included 6 paired situations with a total of 12 situations (3 refusals + 3 complaints).

Different hearers were selected according to some sociolinguistic variables which are thought to be effective in strategy selection as suggested by Brown and Levinson 's Politeness Theory (1987). How the participants changed their speech and their politeness levels and how the native and non-native groups differed from each other in their variations was the goal of the analysis of the DCT. Table 1 shows the distribution of speech acts and variables of social distance and status.

In order to analyse refusal strategies, a sequence of semantic formulae provided by Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990) was adapted and rearranged according to the obtained data. For the coding of complaint strategies, a coding scheme was arranged and adapted based on the semantic formulae developed by Trosborg (1995). The data were coded by the researcher and reviewed by a colleague. Then, the coding for both refusal and complaint strategies were separately transferred to SPSS program with variables of the speakers (native –non-native), and social variables of power (higher – equal). The mean number of refusal strategies and complaint strategies used in each scenario was calculated and compared by one-way ANOVA Post hoc Tukey analysis in respect to how frequently each group used each individual strategy. The face, construct and content validity of the DCT items were determined by receiving expert opinion. A pilot study of the DCT was carried out on 15 Turkish ELT students to determine the unclear and problematic statements of DCT items.

Table 1. Speech act situations and Sociolinguistic Variables

Situations	Speech act	Hearers	Status
1	*Refusal of an Invitation*	*A friend*	*Equal*
2		*A Professor*	*Higher*
3	*Refusal of an Offer*	*A mother*	*Higher*
4		*A friend's mother*	*Higher*
5	*Refusal of a Request*	*A boss*	*Higher*
6		*A friend*	*Equal*
7	*Complaint for an Accident*	*An adult woman*	*Higher*
8		*A young boy*	*Equal*
9	*Complaint for loud TV*	*An old couple*	*Higher*
10		*Some young boys*	*Equal*
11	*Complaint for a lost book*	*A professor*	*Higher*
12		*A friend*	*Equal*

3.2.2 Rating Scale

Two native English speakers, who live in the same region in the USA and had been in Turkey for three months, were chosen to grade each response of the participants of both groups for each situation in a 5-point Likert scale according to an adapted version of the rating scale designed by Cohen (1994) to assess communicative ability was used to understand the effects of responses on the hearer as the second research question.

The reliability and validity of the ratings were obtained by making use of two raters and calculated using a PC version of the GENOVA program which was especially developed for generalizability. According to the results of generalizability analysis in Student/ Rater / Criteria design, when examining estimated variance and total variance, variance caused by students was 50.2 and criteria-based variance was 34.8. That means the main differences were caused by the differences between students and the differences between their abilities in each criterion. Raters and student-rater correlation did not cause any variance (0%), so this can be interpreted as there is no subjectivity between raters. Generalizability Coefficient is 0.92, which is a very high value. And the Decision Coefficient which is used to make generalization for the universe is 0.76, which is also in acceptable level.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Analysis and Comparison of Refusal Strategies

4.1.1 Refusal of an Invitation

The first paired situation was an invitation to a party from a professor in the first and a friend in the second. The frequencies of refusal strategies for each pair were compared across groups of native speakers and Turkish EFL speakers and their differences were interpreted. In the act of refusing an invitation, the most preferred strategy set by all the participants was *"regret + excuse/reason/explanation + Non-performative statement + gratitude / appreciation"* and sometimes a *positive opinion.*

Multiple comparisons of responses showed that ENSs used more direct refusals than TEFLs in the first situation but in the second they were similar. On the other hand, TEFLs responded with more excuse / reason / explanation strategies both to the professor and to the friend with a similar percentage but ENSs used fewer excuse / reason / explanation strategies in the first invitation by a friend. Additionally, expressing positive opinion or wish used by ENSs such as *"I`d love to; I wish I could; It sounds like fun,..."* were used by TEFLs less frequently. Another significant difference was in the frequency of thanking. TESLs (18%) hardly ever thanked to their friends for the invitation while 50% of ENSs offered thanks for the invitation. Similarly, in the second situation, 34% of TEFLs responded with gratitude but still less than ENSs who used appreciation with a percentage of 72%.

Table 2. Multiple Comparisons of the Strategies with Significant Mean Difference across groups and paired situation5 and situation6

Dependant Variables	Participant I	Participant J	Mean Dif.
Direct Refusals / Negative Ability	S1 TEFLs	S1 ENSs	-.420*
		S2 TEFLs	-.220
		S2 ENSs	-.300
Excuse/ Reason/Explanation/	S1 ENSs	S1 TEFLs	-.380*
		S2 TEFLs	-.500*
		S2 ENSs	-200
	S2 ENSs	S1 TEFLs	-.180
		S1 ENSs	.200
		S2 TEFLs	-.300*
Positive Opinion	S2 ENSs	S1 TEFLs	.360*
		S1 ENSs	.240
		S2 TEFLs	.240
Gratitude	S1 TEFLs	S1 ENSs	-.340*
		S2 ENSs	-.540*
	S2 TEFLs	S1 TEFLs	.160
		S1 ENSs	-.180
		S2 ENSs	-.380*

*. *The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.* Tukey HSD

4.1.2 Refusal of an Offer

The second paired situation was refusing some food offered by their own mothers at home and by a friend`s mother whose house they were invited for dinner.

Social distance proved to be an important factor in their refusal strategies for both groups of participants. Their responses to their mothers, who were higher but closely familiar, were significantly different than those to a friend`s mother, who was higher and unfamiliar. Besides, 36% of ENSs rejected the idea of refusing the food in S4, so *accepting* is added to the coding scheme as another strategy.

In S3, both TEFLs and ENSs were more direct and impolite towards their mother and used shorter refusal strategies. The most common response was *"Mum, you know I don`t like that food. Can I have*

something else?" or *"Mum, don`t you know that I hate it. I won`t eat that"*. And they hardly ever expressed regret.

On the other hand, in S4, both groups applied more refusal strategies to avoid being rude. 60% of TEFLs preferred giving an excuse for not eating the food such as *"Sorry, I am full; I can`t eat anymore, I am on a diet; thanks but I am allergic to it."* etc… while ENSs were more realistic in their responses by stating their principles (36%) but adding a positive opinion with the expressions like: *" It looks delicious but I actually don`t like it, thanks anyway"*.

Table 3. Multiple Comparisons of the Strategies with Significant Mean Difference across groups and paired situation3 and situation4

Dependent Variable	Participant I	Participant J	Mean Diff (I-J)
Regret	S3 TEFLs	S3 ENSs	-.100
		S4 TEFLs	-.260*
		S4 ENSs	-.300*
Excuse	S4 TEFLs	S3 TEFLs	.500*
		S3 ENSs	.520*
		S4 ENSs	.360*
Criticize	S3 TEFLs	S3 ENSs	.120
		S4 TEFLs	.240*
		S4 ENSs	.240*
Positive Opinion	S3 TEFLs	S3 ENSs	-.140
		S4 TEFLs	-.440*
		S4 ENSs	-.340*
Gratitude	S3 TEFLs	S3 ENSs	-.360*
		S4 TEFLs	-.280*
		S4 ENSs	-.240

*. *The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.* Tukey HSD

Higher numbers of regret and gratitude expressions were used by both TEFLs and ENSs for the 4th situation. On the other hand, while TEFLs hardly ever thanked to their mothers for the food, 48% of ENSs thanked and gave some positive opinions about the food before refusing it (with a mean difference of 0.360).

4.1.3 Refusal of a Request

The last paired situations were refusals of a request for help with work at the weekend from the interlocutors of a boss in S5 and of a friend in S6. In both situations, the TEFLs and ENSs used similar set of strategies. Usually they started with regret or positive opinion and they refused directly with an excuse. To illustrate, here are some common responses; *"I am so sorry, but I can`t, I have other plans for the weekend."*; *"I`d love to but I promised to meet friends, sorry"*; *"I really want to help you but I feel really sick"*.

Almost all the participants stated an excuse for not helping both interlocutors. To soften their refusals, they also added some other indirect refusal strategies such as a *promise for future acceptance* like *"if you need me later, I can help"*; *If it is emergency, I may try to cancel"*; or conditions for past acceptance like *"I*

would like to if you asked me earlier"; or wish like "*I wish I could help, but…"*, though their frequencies varied across the groups and interlocutors.

Multiple comparisons of strategy frequencies showed that there were significant variations in the use of *statement of regret* and *verbal avoidance* and adjuncts as *statement of positive opinion* as seen in Table 4. Both TEFLs and ENSs preferred saying *"I am sorry"* to their boss more frequently than to a friend, but still in both situations ENSs used regret more than TEFLs. Another difference was that verbal avoidance was more frequent than making an excuse among ENSs when refusing a friend with expressions like *"Maybe next time"; "I may help later"; you can call (another person)"* while TEFLs usually preferred expressing positive opinion and making an excuse in both situations.

Table 4. Multiple Comparisons of the Strategies with Significant Mean Difference across groups and paired situation5 and situation6

Dependent Variable	Participant I	Participant J	Mean Difference (I-J)
Regret	S5 ENSs	S5 TEFLs	.280
		S6 TEFLs	.400*
		S6 ENSs	.120
Excuse	S5 TEFLs	S5 ENSs	-.160
		S6 TEFLs	-.060
		S6 ENSs	.240*
Verbal Avoidance	S5 TEFLs	S5 ENSs	-.160
		S6 TEFLs	-.040
		S6 ENSs	-.400*
Positive Opinion	S5 TEFLs	S5 ENSs	.280*
		S6 TEFLs	.180
		S6 ENSs	.320*

*. *The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.*

4.2 Analysis of Complaint Strategies

4.2.1 Complaint for an Accident

The fourth paired situation presented the complaint strategies of TEFLs and ENSs in the case of a car accident in which the participants` car was hit by careless drivers, one of whom was a young boy in the first situation (S7) and an old woman in the second (S8). Table 11 shows the frequencies of strategies used by TEFLs and ENSs.

The most frequent strategies used by both groups were types of blaming but in general their responses varied greatly both in terms of content and strategy used, which precludes the chance to generalize and make inference. Still there are some striking variations in their strategies which are influenced by the social statues of the interlocutors.

The responses of ENSs varied greatly according to the person to whom they complained. They were more direct and severe while talking to the boy in S7, but their complaints were much politer and more indirect to the woman in S8. The highest mean difference was the opting out preferences of

ENSs in S8 with a mean difference of 0,560 from their responses in S7 and from TEFLs in S7; with a mean difference of 0.420 from TEFLs in S8. More than half of the native participants did not complain in S8, instead they expressed concern for the health of the woman and asked if she is all right, but only 14% of the TEFLs chose opting out in S8. Besides, none of the participants avoided complaining to the boy. Another strategy with a high difference is explicit blame on person. It is mostly used by TEFLs, especially in S7 more than in S8, still more than ENSs in both situations. Very few of the ENSs blamed the person but they blamed the behavior.

Table 5. Multiple Comparisons of Strategies of TEFLs and ENSs with Significant Mean Difference used in S7 and S8

Dependent Variable			**Mean Difference (I-J)**
Opting Out	S7 TEFLS	S8 TEFLs	-.140*
	S7 ENSs	S8 ENSs	-.560*
	S7 TEFLs	S7 ENSs	.000
	S8 ENSs	S8 TEFLs	.420*
Annoyance	S7 TEFLS	S8 TEFLs	.040
	S7 ENSs	S8 ENSs	.080
	S7 TEFLs	S7 ENSs	-.180*
	S8 ENSs	S8 TEFLs	-.140
Direct Accusation	S7 TEFLS	S8 TEFLs	.080
	S7 ENSs	S8 ENSs	.120
	S7 TEFLs	S7 ENSs	-.180*
	S8 ENSs	S8 TEFLs	.120
Explicit Blame on person	S7 TEFLS	S8 TEFLs	.200*
	S7 ENSs	S8 ENSs	-.160
	S7 TEFLs	S7 ENSs	.380*
	S8 ENSs	S8 TEFLs	-.020

*. *The mean difference is significant at the 0.5 level. Tukey HSD*

Some typical responses of TEFLs for S7 were: *"Hey boy, are you crazy? Don`t you see where you are going?"; "Hey! What the hell are you doing?"; "How careless you are! My car is ruined because of you!";* Their responses for S8 were typically: *"Ma`am, why are you driving so carelessly? What are we going to do now?"; Oh my God! Ma`am you know it is your fault, you should pay for it!",*

To illustrate the strategies used by ENSs, here are some common responses for S7: *"Damn it!"; "Are you serious don't you know how to drive!"; "Kid what in the hell were you thinking; I can`t believe this (swear word). Why is wrong with you?"; "Did you not look before turning?"; "Were you not paying any attention!? You just run right into my car and now I'm going to be late for school. Unbelievable!".* However, they replied to S8 with expressions like: *"Ohh no, are you alright?"; "Hi, are you okay? The police are on their way, but would you like me to call an ambulance?".*

4.2.2 Complaint for the TV noise

For those paired situations, the participants were supposed to complain to their neighbors about the loud TV volume as they needed to study for an important exam. In the first situation (S9), the neighbours were described as an old couple who could not hear well; in the second (S10), they were some teenage students.

The most frequently-used strategies were hints and requests in both situations. As many TEFLs and some ENSs used imperatives to tell the students to volume down the TV, it was coded separately from requests.

Table 6. Multiple Comparisons of the Complaint Strategies of TEFLs and ENSs with significant mean differences in Situation9 and Situation10

Dependent Variable	Participant I	Participant J	Mean Difference (I-J)
Hints	S9 TEFLs	S9 ENSs	.140
	S9 TEFLs	S10 TEFLs	.320*
	S9 ENSs	S10 ENSs	.040
	S10 TEFLs	S10 ENSs	-.140
Annoyance	S9 TEFLs	S9 ENSs	-.080
	S9 TEFLs	S10 TEFLs	.220*
	S9 ENSs	S10 ENSs	-.320*
	S10 TEFLs	S10 ENSs	-.620
Request	S9 TEFLs	S9 ENSs	.080
	S9 TEFLs	S10 TEFLs	.520*
	S9 ENSs	S10 ENSs	.360*
	S10 TEFLs	S10 ENSs	.080
Threat	S9 TEFLs	S9 ENSs	.000
	S9 TEFLs	S10 TEFLs	-.120
	S9 ENSs	S10 ENSs	-.320*
	S10 TEFLs	S10 ENSs	-.200
Order	S9 TEFLs	S9 ENSs	.000
	S9 TEFLs	S10 TEFLs	-.480*
	S9 ENSs	S10 ENSs	-.160
	S10 TEFLs	S10 ENSs	.320*

*. *The mean difference is significant at the 0.5 level.* Tukey HSD

In the first situation, TEFLs and ENSs were very similar in their responses. They usually started with an expression of regret like *"sorry, but...", excuse me, sir"* and continued with a hint to explain why they came and then requested to volume the TV down. Only a few of the participants expressed annoyance to the couple. Some typical responses of TEFLs were: *"Excuse me, I have an exam, so could you please lower the TV volume for tonight?"; "I am sorry to disturb, but would you mind lowering the voice, because I cannot study"*.

The responses of ENSs were not very different: "*Excuse me, I have an exam tomorrow, and I am trying to study. Would you mind reducing the volume a little bit, so I can study? Thank you".* However, while talking to the teenagers, none of the participants were so polite. ENSs usually expressed their annoyance about the noise like "*"Hey, I am really sick of your loud TV, turn it off or I`ll call the police"; "Guys, you need to turn down the TV NOW!"* but TESLs also preferred giving orders. Also 32% of ENSs and 12% of

TEFLs treated the students by saying that they will call the police if they continue. "*Hi, guys, I need to study, so lower the voice, Ok?*"; "*Hi, I have an exam tomorrow but I cannot study because of your noise. No one has to listen to you, right?*" are some sample responses of TEFLs.

Table 6 shows that the variations of TEFLs strategies between S9 and S10 do not have a significant mean difference from the variations of ENSs strategies. The highest significant difference is between the frequency of annoyance of TEFLs and ENSs (-,620) in S10 and requests of TEFLs in S9 and S10 (,520). Although ENSs expressed their annoyance, they still used request structures while TEFLs hardly ever expressed annoyance but used imperatives to ask the students to lower the volume.

4.2.3 Complaint for the Lost Book

The last paired situation of the present study was a response to a friend in situation 11 (S11) and to a professor in situation 12 (S12) who apologized for a book s/he borrowed and lost. The complaint strategies of TEFLs and ENSs used for the lost book to a higher-status person and to an equal-status person showed great variance as seen in Table 7.

In Situation 11, TEFLs and ENSs were not considerably different in their strategies while complaining to a friend. Both groups blamed their friends or expressed annoyance and requested a replacement of the book even though their linguistic preferences were changed. So typical examples for S11 from ENSs were: "*You need to get me a new one.*"; "*I don't know how you think I am going to study for the exam tomorrow without my book. I won't be lending you anything in the future either*". TEFLs` complaint examples to their friends were: *"It`s my fault to trust you. How can you lose it?"*; "*How can I study now? Don`t you know I have an exam?"; "I can`t believe in you! Now because of you, I`ll fail!".*

Table 7. Multiple Comparisons of the Complaint Strategies of TEFLs and ENSs with significant mean differences in Situation11 and Situation12

Dependent Variable	Participant I	Participant J	Mean Difference (I-J)
Opting Out	S11 TEFLs	S11 ENSs	.140
	S11 TEFLs	S12 TEFLs	-.460*
	S11 ENSs	S12 ENSs	-.280
	S12 TEFLs	S12 ENSs	.320*
Hints	S11 TEFLs	S11 ENSs	-.140
	S11 TEFLs	S12 TEFLs	-.060
	S11 ENSs	S12 ENSs	-0.32
	S12 TEFLs	S12 ENSs	-.400*
Annoyance	S11 TEFLs	S11 ENSs	.200*
	S11 TEFLs	S12 TEFLs	.240*
	S11 ENSs	S12 ENSs	0.04
	S12 TEFLs	S12 ENSs	0
Request	S11 TEFLs	S11 ENSs	-.180
	S11 TEFLs	S12 TEFLs	.040
	S11 ENSs	S12 ENSs	-.120
	S12 TEFLs	S12 ENSs	.340*
Threat	S11 TEFLs	S11 ENSs	-.240*
	S11 TEFLs	S12 TEFLs	.080
	S11 ENSs	S12 ENSs	.320*
	S12 TEFLs	S12 ENSs	0

**. The mean difference is significant at the 0.5 level. Tukey HSD*

A clear difference between TEFLs and ENSs was seen in S12. Most of the TEFLs did not say anything about the lost book. They just preferred to find a solution for the problem themselves. In contrast, ENSs used hints to explain the importance of the book for them and politely requested a replacement for the book or money to buy a new one.

There is not any significant mean difference between TEFLs and ENSs in S11. In S12, the mean difference between TEFLs and ENSs is significant in opting out (,320), hints (,400) and requests (,340). While ENSs did not show any significant variance in their complaint strategies to a professor and to a friend, TEFLs changed their *opting out* and *annoyance* preferences greatly between S11 and S12.

4.3 Analysis of Sociolinguistic Ability Ratings of TEFLs

Research Question 2: How will the responses of the non-native speakers to refusal and complaint situations be perceived by native speakers socioculturally?

The final data was collected from mean scores of two raters who graded Turkish participants' responses in a 5-point Likert type rating scale by Cohen (1994) in three categories; sociocultural ability, sociolinguistic ability and appropriate register to understand the acceptability of their speech act productions. Figure 1 shows the total means of scores of ratings for all situations in the DCT.

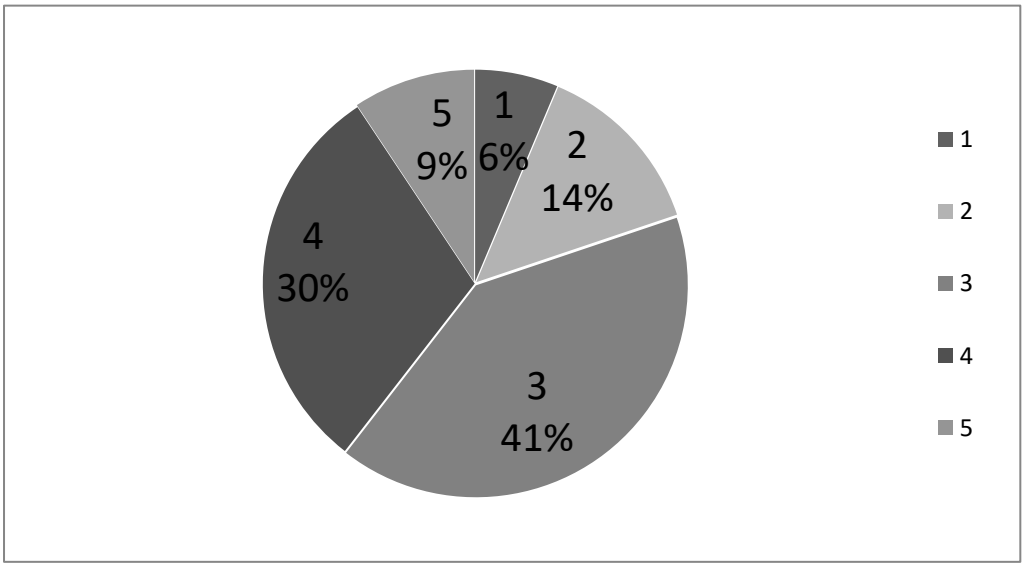

Fig 1. The Percentages of Total Sociocultural Ability Scores of TEFLs in DCT

As seen in Fig. 1, the highest percentage of the scores belongs to *3 (41%), 4 (30%), 5 (9%).* That means for the most part, participants provided socioculturally appropriate speech, but somehow needed interpretation or clarification to be totally understood. However, 20% of participants gave responses which lacked sociocultural appropriateness and were not clear with too little information. Table 8 shows the distribution of scores in each situation for a better understanding of their performances in speech acts.

TEFLs' refusal productions were accepted as really good in terms of their linguistic choices, as seen in Table 8. It means that they have the linguistic tools necessary to perform refusal speech acts. But the use of inappropriate linguistic items was also common. "*Thank you, but I am very tired, please let me get relaxed for some days.*" is seen acceptable but also has a negative impact. As another example, *"your meals are too perfect, but I never eat this meal".* Here the student intended to give a positive opinion and

express his/her principle, but *"too perfect"* gives a negative meaning, so makes it inappropriate for the situation.

Table 8. The Frequencies of Sociolinguistic Ability Scores in Each Situation

Scores	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12
5	6	4	7	4	2	5	7	5	5	1	5	5
4	29	23	24	14	13	22	6	8	12	13	8	9
3	13	18	17	23	25	19	22	14	23	24	22	24
2	1	2	2	5	8	3	9	16	7	8	13	7
1	1	3	0	4	2	1	6	7	3	4	2	5
Total	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50

In complaints, low scores of sociolinguistic abilities were more frequent, too. "*Sir, Why don't you be careful?"* (S7), *"Damn it! Are you blind?"* (S8), *"I have to study but your TV's noise is irritating me. Please help me!."* (S9), *"Can you listen or watch the TV less loudly* (S10),", *"The blame is mine, I shouldn't give it you!"(S11), "it is Ok, not important"(S12),* are responses which got both sociocultural and sociolinguistic low scores.

5. Discussion

The current study attempted to investigate sociolinguistic variations in the refusal and complaint behaviors of Turkish students of English towards different people, who have higher or equal social status determined by their age, distance and social power, in similar situations by comparing them to native speakers of English.

Multi-dimensional nature of sociolinguistic competence which is closely tied with social and cultural behavioral norms and individual identities makes it difficult to reach at a single conclusion about whether a person has it or not. Therefore, the present study was limited to investigate two aspects of sociolinguistic competence; speech act strategy variations and their appropriateness.

In general, the findings show that Turkish learners of English with high proficiency level can successfully differentiate their refusal and complaint strategies according to interlocutors with different social status like the L2 learners in Matsumura's (2007) and Chang's (2010) study, who used the strategies in a context-sensitive manner. They have the linguistic resources such as varying their apology strategies, linguistic forms in the same strategy, and contents of reason when apologizing to the hearers with different social status to demonstrate sociopragmatic variation in their apology strategies. Though, as this variation was based on their own cultural values and thinking systems, they showed differences from native speakers in their varied responses between high and equal status interlocutors. These differences make it clear how cultural backgrounds may affect the language used and may cause sociopragmatic failures.

One of the important findings of the refusal strategies analysis was that Turkish participants used more specific and longer excuses for their refusals in every situation (increased in formal situations) compared to native speakers who used more direct strategies in both pairs of situations. However, *thanking* was not as common among the Turkish as it was among the American. For example, almost none of the Turkish students thanked to their mothers for the food she offered. Eisenstein and Bodman (1993) stated that in several cultures, among family members, if one has performed a particular act which is a part of a social role, another person does not need to say 'thank you' to express appreciation. This statement proved to be true for Turkish culture but not American culture.

Another notable finding was that the use of intensifiers as a means of intensifying the excuses in refusals increased with higher status, which is in parallel with Cohen and Olshtain's (1983) finding that intensification increases with lower status in apology situations. However, while refusing a request from a boss and a friend, English native speakers used more intensifiers and expressing regret was also higher than the Turkish. This supports the findings of Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (l990) who reported on the differences between Japanese ESL learners' and Americans' refusals in English and found that in general, the Japanese were more inclined to differentiate their refusals according to whether they were addressing a higher or lower status person, whereas the Americans differentiated according to how well they knew the addressee.

In complaint strategies, significant differences were observed between Turkish and American participants in some situations. One striking difference was that when complaining about an accident, Turkish participants made explicit and severe complaints both to a young man and to an adult woman (equal – high, respectively) by putting the blame directly on the person. The complaints were short, direct and aggressive. On the other hand, native speakers used more implicit and less severe complaints in both situations, putting the blame on the behavior or modifying the blame and even half of them refused to complain to the adult woman for the accident. They increased the intensity of their complaints by lexical intensifiers and aggressive expressions to the young boy, but they also softened their complaints by using downgraders to the adult woman. Similarly, Trosborg (1995) found that non-native speakers tended to use more upgraders increasing the severity of expressions. Also House and Kasper (1981) concluded from their study comparing native speakers and German English speakers that the Germans were more direct and severe in their complaints.

The last paired situation, which involved a complaint to a teacher and a friend who lost an important book, provided a controversial result, indeed. Americans expressed their need for book, their complaints and their requests for the replacement both to the friend and to the teacher, used intensifiers to upgrade the emergency of getting the book and applied polite request strategies. However, Turkish participants avoided complaining to the teacher while they complained to their friends. This finding suggest that familiarity is also an important factor in their strategy preferences as they did not care about their politeness while complaining to an adult woman in the accident situation, they did not complain to a high-status person who they knew. This is in contradiction to Bikmen's (2011) findings in his master thesis that Turkish speakers complained more to authority figures and less to friends and family, and to strangers, with respect to the ENSs.

There might be some other underlying factors causing this discrepancy which needs further attention. As Bonikowska (1988) who studied complaints and the opting-out choice stated, one reason for opting out could be contextual factors such as the relationship of the speaker and the hearer.

The second research question was about how native speakers see and evaluate Turkish students' responses to understand the perspective of the hearer. A word about the scale is in order here. Although two raters may not be enough to generalize for the hearer perspective, the results provided an idea about how their responses are understood, providing more information about their performances. The results showed that Turkish students have sociocultural and sociolinguistic abilities to some extent. However, although they can apply formal and informal strategies and apply variations, because of their different cultural background, they tend to use linguistic forms and expressions which are not acceptable in the target culture.

To sum up, Turkish learners of English with high level of proficiency proved to be able to use many various strategies and modality markers in order to refuse and complain, and to vary their strategies according to the interlocutors' status, age and gender. It means that they have the necessary pragmalinguistic tools and abilities for a communicative act, which is supported by many studies and theses done in Turkey focusing on cross-cultural and cross-linguistic differences of Turkish students (Onalan, 2009; Cimen, 2009; Deveci, 2010; Bikmen, 2011, etc.).

6. Conclusion

According to the findings of this study, some conclusions and attributions can be made in the theoretical framework.

Values governing appropriateness of speech behaviors are culture-specific. But language learners usually use their own values and beliefs about what is appropriate or not, which is highly prone to cause breakdowns in cross-cultural communication. Muniandy (2010) suggests that an overall understanding of the significant role of cultural variables in cross-cultural interactions will act as a bridge to mutual understanding and acceptance in situations of cultural conflict. Students must be aware that in certain cultures, the people are expected to respond to certain utterances in an appropriate way, which is of the linguistic norm.

In conclusion, the present study suggests that language cannot be separated from its creator, the culture. Speech always includes social implications which somehow reflect the cultural background, status and identity of the speaker. Therefore, a language learner needs to know these social implications in the new language so that s/he can be free to choose how to express himself/herself and can avoid prejudice and misinterpretations. And in Turkey, where students are away from the target culture, it is the responsibility of ESL and EFL teachers to help their students be aware of the sociolinguistic variables of English.

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