

PRAGMATIC APPROPRIATENESS IN INTERCULTURAL EFL COMMUNICATION: TURKISH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' CALIBRATION OF SPEECH ACTS BY INTERLOCUTOR CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Seçkin Can

*School of Foreign Languages, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Samsun, Türkiye ,
seckin.can@omu.edu.tr [ORCID: 0000-0002-6710-7633](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6710-7633)*

Abstract:

This study examines how Turkish university EFL students construct pragmatic appropriateness in intercultural communication and whether they adjust their choices across same-culture and intercultural encounters. Using a written discourse completion task, 62 students responded to scenarios that varied the interlocutor, a familiar same-culture Turkish interlocutor versus a less familiar international interlocutor from a different cultural background, and social power, across four speech acts: requests, refusals, disagreements, and apologies. Each response was followed by a short reflective comment, and a Turkish-language version of a subset of scenarios was administered to provide a first-language baseline. Responses were coded for directness and politeness strategies using established taxonomies, rated for pragmatic appropriateness, and reflective comments were analysed thematically. As a group, learners shifted toward greater indirectness and negative politeness in the intercultural encounter. However, the calibration was not uniform: roughly 61 per cent showed adjustment in at least three of the four matched scenario pairs, while the rest showed more limited or inconsistent adjustment, often invoking first-language norms. The findings support the argument that concrete discourse choices may provide a limited window onto the pragmatic dimension of intercultural competence, and they suggest that calibration toward a culturally unfamiliar interlocutor may constitute a plausible pedagogical target rather than an automatic consequence of proficiency or positive attitudes.

Keywords: *Intercultural pragmatics; Politeness strategies; Pragmatic appropriateness; Pragmatic transfer; Speech acts; Turkish EFL learners.*