REQUEST STRATEGIES IN INDONESIAN[1]

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1. Introduction

This study investigates how native speakers of Bahasa Indonesia perform requests in everyday situations.

While many studies have examined this important speech act as performed by native speakers, the range of languages is still relatively small. Requests by native speakers in English are the most frequently described (e.g. Ervin-Tripp 1976; House & Kasper 1981; Blum-Kulka 1989, Blum-Kulka & House 1989; Weizman 1989, 1993; Bilbow 1995; Aijmer 1996). Requests by native speakers of other Western languages are also frequently studied; for example, French (e.g. Béal 1990; Harlow 1990; Koike 1994; van Mulken 1996), German (e.g. House & Kasper 1981; House & Kasper 1987; Faerch & Kasper 1989; House 1989), Spanish (e.g. Walters 1979; Rintell 1981; le Pair 1996), and Danish (e.g. House & Kasper 1987; Blum-Kulka & House 1989; Faerch & Kasper 1989; Trosborg 1995). However, relatively few studies of requests in Asian languages have been published in English. Of these, almost all focus on either Japanese (e.g. Miyagawa 1982; Ikuta 1988; Fukushima 1996) or Mandarin (e.g. Lee-Wong 1994; Zhang 1995a, 1995b; Hong 1996). Importantly, no empirical descriptions exist of requests in Indonesian.

This study has two main purposes. The first is to help us to understand how requests are performed across a wider range of languages, and hence to what extent strategies for performing requests - and speech acts generally - are common across languages. The second is practical: To facilitate cross-cultural communication between native speakers of Indonesian and of English, and contribute to the teaching of Indonesian. Bahasa Indonesia (henceforth BI or Indonesian), the national language of Indonesia, is spoken by over 100 million people (cf. Nababan 1991), and is studied extensively at both school and university level in Australia (cf. Worsley 1993). Empirical descriptions of how everyday speech acts are performed in Indonesian are needed to help students learn to perform these speech acts appropriately.

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2. Background

2.1. *Universality of speech act performance*

It has often been asserted by theoreticians (e.g. Searle 1969, 1975; Gordon & Lakoff 1971) that essential principles for performing speech acts are universal. Some empirical researchers support this claim, such as Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), Fraser (1978) and Fraser, Rintell and Walters (1980), all of whom observe a close formal correspondence in how strategies are realised across certain languages; and Fraser and Nolan (1981), who claim that the relative level of deference conveyed by each strategy is also essentially the same across languages. However, other empirical evidence disputes strong claims for universality of speech act performance. Blum-Kulka's two studies on a large corpus of requests by speakers of a number of languages are especially convincing in this regard. Blum-Kulka (1989) found that certain request strategies were not shared by languages, that significant differences existed between languages within shared strategies as well, and that social meanings carried by the same strategy sometimes differed. In another study (Blum-Kulka 1983) she specifically found Gordon and Lakoff's (1971) claim for universal conversational postulates to be disconfirmed, and concluded that an essential similarity in speech act strategies "is illusory and tends to disappear on close analysis" (Blum-Kulka 1983: 39).

On the whole, it appears that strong claims for universality of speech act performance must be doubted, but that ways of encoding politeness - including the making of requests - are similar across many languages.

2.2. *Linguistic politeness theory*

The most influential theory of linguistic politeness is the 'face-saving' theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). They claim that many speech acts (including requests) intrinsically threaten the hearer's 'negative face': Their want to have their actions unimpeded by others. The more an act threatens the hearer's face, the more S will want to choose a strategy that minimises risk to H's face - which means an increasingly indirect strategy (Brown and Levinson 1987: 65-71). Brown and Levinson further assert that the degree of threat to face posed by a request is composed of three factors: The power of speaker relative to hearer, the social distance between speaker and hearer, and the size of the imposition that the requested act entails (Brown & Levinson 1987: 74-77).

2.3. *Notion of a request*

Searle classifies a request as a Directive speech act: one whose illocutionary purpose is to get the Hearer to do something (Searle 1971/1990: 359). Searle describes a request specifically as act which counts as an attempt to get H to do an act which S wants H to do, and which S believes that H is able to do; and which it is not obvious that H will do in the normal course of events or of H's own accord (Searle 1969: 66). This notion of an "act" which S attempts to elicit from H may include the purely verbal acts of giving information,

or granting permission.

2.4. *Request strategies*

A request may vary in strategy type and level of directness. The best-known empirical study of cross-cultural pragmatics, the CCSARP (Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project), identified three levels of directness for requests (cf. Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper 1989). The first level is 'direct'. This includes forms which convey requestive force by purely syntactic means, such as grammatical mood or an explicit performative verb. The second level is 'conventionally indirect'. This comprises indirect formulas that are conventionalised in the language as a means of requesting. The last level is 'non-conventionally indirect' (i.e. hints). A hint is an indirect request form which is *not* conventionalised in the language, and hence requires more inferencing activity for the hearer to derive the speaker's requestive intent.

At each of these three levels of directness, a number of sub-strategies are also proposed by the CCSARP (cf. CCSARP 1989). While the resulting taxonomy has been criticised in some respects (e.g. van Mulken 1996), it provides a highly suitable framework for the present study and will be used with only minor adaptations to classify these Indonesian requests.

3. Method

3.1. *The subjects*

These consisted of 18 Bahasa Indonesia native speaking students studying degree programs in a range of disciplines at an Australian university. Half were male and half were female; none had been in Australia for a period longer than three years. Subjects were from various regions of Indonesia: Most (12/18) were from the main island of Java and had always lived in one part of Java or another; most others (4/18) had spent a large part of their life in Java and the rest of it elsewhere in Indonesia.

3.2. *Method of data elicitation*

The data were collected by means of interactive oral roleplay, a method frequently employed in empirical studies of pragmatics (cf. Kasper and Dahl 1991; Aston 1995). To select the roleplay situations, the researcher noted situations in which requests were made in everyday interactions during two separate one-month trips to Indonesia for study and travel in the year prior to data collection. Twenty seven request situations were selected (for a complete list of role play situations see Appendix B). The total number of requests thus elicited from Indonesian subjects was approximately 260.

3.3. *Social assessment of the situations*

 To provide an indication of speakers' perceptions of the threat to face entailed in each request, each role play situation was analysed for i) status of the requester relative to the addressee, ii) size of imposition involved in the request, and iii) how comfortable the requester feels making the request.[2] To assess the values of these three variables, fifteen BI native speakers of Indonesian (from the same university population as the role play subjects) were given a questionnaire in which they asked to read a description of all the request situations. For each situation they awarded a value from 1 to 5 for each of the three variables of status, imposition, and speaker's comfort. Mean values were then calculated, which were used as a basis to attribute a raw score for the value of each variable in each situation (see Appendix C).

3.4. *Procedure for conducting role play sessions*

Subjects and partners performed their role on the basis of a written cue, worded in such a way that subjects were not explicitly told to make a request. Each subject performed half the request situations (i.e. 14 or 15), as well as a number of non- request or 'distractor' situations (cf. Olshtain & Cohen 1983: 31). Subjects performed half their role plays with one partner (male) and the rest with another (female). All role plays were audio-recorded.

4. Results

The Indonesian subjects used a range of request types with varying levels of directness, outlined in Table 1 below.

4.1. *Direct requests*

These account for a large proportion (42.7%) of subjects' requests. The most direct and frequently used type of direct request is the imperative (accounting for 17.4% or 37/213 requests: see Table 2 below).
        Approximately half the imperatives (19/37) are full and the rest are elided, consisting of the name of the requested object. An example of each type is below (S stands for subject and P for roleplay partner in all following examples):

	(1)	(a hotel guest to a servant)					
	S:	*...tolong(.)*	*uh)(.)*	*cucikan*	*pakaian*	*saya*	*yang(.) kotor*
		please	uh	wash	clothes	my	LIG dirty

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[2]   Status rather than power was chosen to be assessed by informants as status tends to be the obvious cue to power which is presented in interaction (cf. Goody 1978: 11). The factor of how comfortable the speaker feels making the request was assessed because this factor seems intuitively likely to provide a useful overall indication of a speaker's perception of the size of threat to face. Values of social distance were not chosen to be systematically assessed as values of this variable tend to be transparent.

Table 1. Request types used by Indonesian subjects (in descending order of directness)

A. DIRECT	i) Imperative
	ii) Explicit performative
	iii) Hedged performative
	iv) Goal statement
	v) Want statement
B. CONVENTIONALLY INDIRECT	vi) Query preparatory: ability or permission
	vii) Query preparatory: availability
C. NON-CONVENTIONALLY INDIRECT	viii) Question hint
	ix) Statement hint

Table 2. Proportion of different request types used by Indonesian subjects

Strategy type	Sub-strategy	n	%
DIRECT	Imperative	37	17.4
	Performative or Goal statement	39	18.3
	Want statement	15	6.3
CONVENT-IONALLY INDIRECT	Query preparatory: modal	99	46.5
	Query preparatory: availability:	10	4.7
NON-CONVENT-IONALLY INDIRECT	Hint: Question	10	4.7
	Hint: Statement	3	1.4
	Total No of requests	213*	

This total does not include requests for information: see Table 3

S: '... please wash my dirty clothes.'

(2)   (a customer in a restaurant to a waiter)

S: *Menu   makanannya   itu?*
          menu   food-the   that

S: 'The menu?'

Occasionally subjects use an explicit performative, in which the illocutionary intent is named explicitly with the verb *minta* 'ask for/ request' (3.3% or 7/213 of requests) . Examples:

(3)   (a diner to a waiter in a restaurant)
S: *... saya(,)   saya   minta (.)   nasi   goreng   saja.*
          I   I   ask for   rice   fried   just

S: '...I'll just have fried rice.'

(4)   (a customer to the ticket seller in a cinema)
S: *Minta karcis satu   Mbak*
          ask for ticket   one   sister

S: 'I'll have one ticket.'

Somewhat more frequent is the *hedged* performative, which also names the illocutionary intent explicitly with the verb *minta* 'ask for/request', but in which the force of *minta* is attenuated by the use of a modal verb (10.3% or 22/213 of requests)[3]. Examples:

(5)   (a prospective student to an official in the immigration office)
S: *Saya   mau   minta formulir (.) ... untuk   mengajukan   studi*
          I   want   ask for form(s)   for   propose   study
          di   Australi.
          in   Australia

S: 'I'd like the forms to apply to study in Australia.'

(6)   (a customer to a clerk in the post office)

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[3]   Whether *hedged* performative requests have a stronger illocutionary force than other request types that employ the same modal verbs: Want statements with *mau* 'want' or query preparatory requests with *bisa* 'can', is doubtful. However, they are classified here as highly direct because they satisfy a key technical criterion of direct requests: Presence of an explicit illocutionary verb.

S:	... *bisa* *minta* *amplop*	*sama*	*perangko*	*untuk (.)*
	can ask for envelope(s)	with	stamp(s)	for
	dikirim *ke* *Australi?*			
	PASS-send to Australia			

S: '... can I have envelopes and stamps to send to Australia?'

Occasionally subjects use a Goal statement, in which they name the desired state of affairs, or goal of the request (4.7% or 10/213 of instances). Examples:

(7)   (asking to try on shoes in a store)
S: *...coba yang (.)*   *sepatu ini (.)* *ukuran 42.*
      try   LIG   shoes this   size   42

S: '...I'll try these shoes in size 42.'

(8)   (a student asking a classmate to look on at their book)
S: *... ikut baca* *sama-sama*   *ya*
      join in read   together   yes

S: '... we'll read together huh.'

Sometimes subjects use a Want statement, in which they state a desire for the goal of the request to be realised with a relevant modal verb, typically *mau* 'want' (6.3% or 15/237 of requests). Examples:

(9)   S: *...saya* *mau*   *mencoba*   *kaset*   *Iwan Fals*   *yang*
            I   want   try   cassette   Iwan Fals   LIG
            terbaru.
            most-new

      S: '... I'd like to listen to the latest Iwan Fals cassette.'

(10) S: *Saya*   *mau*   *majalah*   *Tempo Pak*
            I   want   magazine   Tempo father

      S: 'I'd like Tempo magazine.'

4.2. *Conventionally indirect requests*

This is the most common type of request in the study. Over half (51.1% or 109/213) of requests are conventionally indirect. The vast majority of these are 'query preparatory modal' requests, in which a speaker uses a relevant modal verb to ask - on the face of it - a question about hearer's ability or a question about speaker's permission, which is in fact a formulaic request. This request type alone accounts for close to half of the requests in the

study (see Table 2 above).

Requests consisting of a question about the hearer's ability are made with the modal verb *bisa* 'can'. Example:

(11)   (asking a stranger to move over in a crowded eating stall)
S: *... bisa bergeser   sedikit Mas*
        can   shift   little   brother

S: '... can you move over a bit?'

Requests consisting of a question about speaker's permission are made with either the modal verb *bisa* 'can' or *boleh* 'may/ allowed to.'[4] An example with each:

(12)   (a new hotel guest asks to borrow a pen from a hotel receptionist to fill in the registration form)
S: *...<u>bisa</u> pinjem (.)   bolpoinnya?*
        can   borrow   pen-the

S: '... can I borrow the pen?'

(13)   ("hotel guest" situation above)
S: <u>*Boleh*</u>*(.)   um (.) saya   pinjem pena?*
        May   umm   I   borrow pen

S: 'May I borrow a pen?'

Occasionally subjects use a sub-strategy that questions a different condition, namely, the availability of the desired item (4.7% or 10/ 213 of requests). Examples:

(14)   (asking a waiter for a menu)
S: *... <u>ada</u>   daftar menu nggak*
        there is   list   menu   not

S: '... is there a menu (or not)?'

(15)   (asking a stranger for a light for a cigarette)
S: *... <u>punya</u>   api   Mbak?*
        have   fire   sister

S: '... have you got a light?'

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[4] This classification of the requests *Boleh saya?* "May I?" and *Bisa saya?* 'Can I?' as questions about speaker's *permission* is implicitly supported by van der Wijst (1995: 481-482, 487 table), Trosborg (1995: 199-200), and Aijmer (1996: 15), all of whom classify the requests "May I?" and "Can I?" as questions about speaker's permission. These writers regard the request "Can you?" on the other hand, as a question about hearer's ability.

4.3. *Non-conventionally indirect requests (hints)*

Subjects use considerably fewer hints than they do either of the other two categories of requests above (see Table 2 above). Most hints are in the form of questions (4.7% or 10/213 of requests). Most of these are checks on information that function as requests because they succeed in eliciting an offer from the interlocutor. Examples (the hint is underlined):

(16)   (asking a friend for a lift back to college on their motor-scooter)
S: ...*mau* *pulang*
       want   go-home
       (.)
P: *Ya*   *ya (.)*   *mau*   *pulang*   *juga.*
       yes   yes   want   go-home   too
S: *Ya*
       yes
P: *Sama-sama*   *deh*
       together   MP

S: '...<u>are you going home?</u>'
       (.)
P: 'Yeah yeah, are you going home too?'
S: 'Yeah.'
P: 'We'll go together huh.'

(17)   (asking a friend to pass some magazines across, while watching TV together at his or her house)
S: <u>*Itu (.)* *majalah-majalah*   *baru*   *bukan* *itu.*</u>
       Those   magazine-magazine   new   not   those
P: *Mm mm (.)*   *mau*   *minjem*
       Mm mm   want   borrow

S: '<u>Those (.) are new magazines aren't they?</u>'
P: 'Mm hm. Do you want to borrow them?'

Statement hints are only rarely used (1.4% or 3/213 of requests). All instances consist of the information that the speaker does not have the desired item. An example:

(18)   (asking a hotel receptionist for a pen to fill in the registration form)
S: ... *maaf*   *saya*   *tidak*   *membawa*   *bolpoin*
       sorry   I   not   bring   pen

S: '... sorry, I didn't bring a pen.'

4.4. *Situational variation in selection of request type*

This is examined with regard to imperatives (as the main direct request type), query preparatory modals (as the main conventionally indirect type), and hints. Values of social variables mentioned below are based on assessments by native speaker informants (see "Method").

Imperatives are selected most frequently in three situations: asking the bus conductor to tell them when they reach their stop (5/9 subjects), asking a taxi driver to stop for a minute so they can buy cigarettes (5/9 subjects), and asking a hotel servant to have their dirty clothes washed (3/9 subjects). In the "bus conductor" and "hotel servant" situations the speaker's perceived high status relative to the hearer is likely to have influenced imperative selection, as speaker's status in this situation ranks very high or high (see Appendix C). In the "taxi driver" situation an additional factor probably influences choice of imperative; namely, the factor of urgency, which may take priority over face considerations (cf. Brown and Levinson (1987: 95-96). Indonesians are likely to regard the request as urgent in that sense, as suddenly stopping a taxi in crowded Indonesian streets is likely to be difficult and dangerous, making clear communication between speaker and hearer very important.

Query preparatory modal requests tend to be used most often when the overall threat to face is perceived as relatively high. The features of low speaker status, high imposition, and low degree of comfort are strikingly present in most of the ten situations in which this strategy is used by 5/9 or more subjects; for example, in asking a stranger to move over in a crowded eating stall (where 9/9 subjects use this strategy), asking to look on at a classmate's textbook (6/9 subjects), asking a lecturer for an essay extension (6/9 subjects), and asking a lecturer for last week's handout (5/9 subjects) (see Appendix C).

The other striking feature about this request type is that while it is used most often in face-threatening situations, it is used to some degree in almost every situation (in all but two of the 26 situations). This makes it the archetypal request strategy for subjects, in that it is selected across a broad range of situation types.

Hints are not selected by a coherent pattern of situational variation. The situations in which subjects use hints most frequently have little in common. In the situation where the most subjects use hints, asking a hotel servant to have their clothes washed (3/9 subjects), the speaker's status in relation to the hearer is assessed as very high and the speaker's comfort in making the request as high also (see Appendix C). But in asking a friend for a lift home from the shops, where 2/9 subjects use hints, the speaker's status is assessed as only moderate and the speaker's comfort as fairly low (see Appendix C). On the whole, variation in use of this highly indirect strategy appears to be erratic, and not linked with a perceived large threat to face.

4.5. *Asking*

Requests for information ('Asks') are analysed separately from other requests in the study. This is because of problems presented by one strategy for asking for information, the 'direct

question.'[5] A direct question is the most direct way of all to ask for information, but as a means of asking for anything other than information (e.g. a good or a service), a question is *not* direct. For this reason, requests made in the five situations where the goal is information (see Appendix B) are classified on their own scale of directness, outlined in Table 3 below.

4.5.1. *Asking: Direct*

Subjects strongly favour a direct strategy to ask for information (80% or 36/45 of Asks). In particular, they make very frequent use of direct questions, which alone account for a large majority of Asks by subjects (see Table 3 below). Examples of direct questions:

> (19)   (asking a stranger on a railway platform if the train that just came in goes to Bandung)
> S: *...apa ini (.) kereta yang   mau   ke (.) Bandung?*
>   INT   this   train   LIG   go   to   Bandung
>
> S: '... is this the train to Bandung?'
>
> (20)   (asking a police officer on duty at the station where to report your lost passport)
> S: *... saya (.)   kehilangan   paspor   Pak   <u>ke</u>   <u>mana</u>*
>   I   suffer-loss   pasport   father   to   where
> S: <u>*ya*   *harus*   *melaporkannya.*</u>
>   yes   must   report-it
>
> S: 'I've lost my passport. <u>Where should I report it?</u>'

No other direct asking strategy is used with high frequency by subjects (see Table 3).

4.5.2. *Asking: Conventionally indirect*

Subjects only occasionally use a conventionally indirect request form to ask for information (11.1% or 5/45 of instances). These forms are nearly all query preparatory modal requests, all of which use the modal verb *bisa* 'can'. An example:

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[5]   This notion of a 'direct question' is difficult to define rigorously. Edmondson (1981) defines a direct question which he calls a "Question", as a query-locution used to perform a request for information with "*a minimum of indirectness*" (Edmondson 1981: 195, emphasis added). As he acknowledges, this qualifying clause is rather unsatisfactory. However, a sufficiently clear intuitive notion of what is meant by a direct question can be gained through contrast with other interrogative request forms. Compare these ways of asking a stranger in the street the way to the post office: "Where's the post office?" [= direct question]; "Can I ask where the post office is?" [= hedged performative request]; "Can you/will you tell me where the Post Office is? [= query preparatory request]; "Do you know where the Post Office is?" [= query preparatory request]; "Is the Post Office far from here?" [= question hint].

(21)   (asking a stranger in the street the way to the post office)
S: *bisa   saya   tolong dikasihtahu (.) jalan   ke   kantor pos*
       can   I   please PASS-tell   street   to   office post
S: *'tuh   lewat   mana   ya*
       the   through   where   yes

S: 'Can you please tell me the way to the post office?'

Table 3. Proportion of different Asking strategies used by Indonesian subjects

		n	%
A. DIRECT	Direct question	33	73.3
	Performative (hedged)	1	2.2
	Want statement	2	4.4
B. CONVENTIONALLY INDIRECT	Query preparatory: Permission	4	8.9
	Query preparatory: Availability:	1	2.2
C. NON-CONVENTIONALLY INDIRECT	Hint: Statement	4	8.9
	Total No of Asks	45	

4.5.3. *Asking: Hints*

Hints are used occasionally by subjects to ask for information (8.9% or 4/45 of instances: see Table 3 above). All these hints consist of a statement that the speaker does not know the desired information, as in [100] below:

(22)   (asking the police officer on duty at the station where to report your lost passport)
S: *... paspor   saya   hilang (.)   tapi   saya   nggak tahu*
       passport   my   lost   but   I   not   know
S: *kepada   siapa   saya   harus   melapor*
       to   whom   I   must   report

S: '... my passport's lost and I don't know who I should report it to'

4.5.4. *Situational variation in selection of direct questions*

Subjects use direct questions to ask for information consistently: this strategy is frequently selected in all five Asking situations. A slight tendency can be observed for subjects to use direct questions more frequently when the request is less face-threatening. For example, in asking a coach conductor when the coach will arrive at Denpasar, direct questions are used more frequently (9/9 subjects) than in any other Asking situation, and the threat to face in this situation is apparently perceived of as smaller than in any other (speaker's status being clearly highest, the imposition clearly smallest, and the speaker's comfort clearly the highest). However, this trend does not emerge strongly.

5. Discussion

It is noteworthy that the types of requests made by these Indonesians subjects are successfully captured by the taxonomy devised for the CCSARP (cf CCSARP 1989).[6] This taxonomy was devised on the basis of request data from five languages very different to Bahasa Indonesia (all Western languages, except Hebrew). This supports the claim that strategies and sub-strategies for making requests tend to be very similar across languages, and demonstrates that this similarity can be found across languages of diverse cultures.

The variation in strategy choice by these Indonesians is generally consistent with Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) claim that speakers will select an increasingly indirect request strategy as the perceived threat to the hearer's face increases. However, selection of hints by Indonesians - which varied erratically by situation - did not support that claim. This is consistent with other evidence concerning the relationship between hints and politeness. Blum-Kulka (1987) found that speakers of English and Hebrew in fact perceive hints as *less* polite than conventionally indirect requests; Gunarwan (1993) found this to be true of speakers of Indonesian as well. So it appears hints may not after all be the least face-threatening means to perform a request, and the present study supports the notion that they will not necessarily used more frequently as threat to face increases.

It is important that these Indonesian subjects select the query preparatory modal sub-strategy as their main request type. The query preparatory request appears to be the main request type of native speakers across a large number of languages (cf. Blum-Kulka 1989: 52; Kasper 1989: 47). However, the vast majority of languages for which the predominance of this request type has been established are Germanic or Romance languages, such as German, Danish, English, French (in the CCSARP project, cf. Blum-

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[6]   The precise relation between the categories used in the present study and those of the CCSARP (cf. CCSARP 1989) is as follows: The present sub-substrategy "imperative" falls within the CCSARP sub-strategy "Mood derivable", and the present sub-strategy "Goal Statement" is an example of the CCSARP sub-strategy "Locution derivable". The present hint sub-strategies "Question hint" and "Statement hint" cut across the CCSARP sub-strategies "Strong hint" and "Mild hint", but those two CCSARP hint categories would validly account for all hints in the data. Only one of the nine CCSARP sub-strategies is not represented in the Indonesian data; namely, "Suggestory formula", and this request type exists in Indonesian and could be used in the roleplay situations in this study (e.g. one could ask for an essay extension with *Bagaimana kalau hari Senin?* 'What about Monday?').

Kulka & House 1989); or Spanish (le Pair 1996), or Dutch (van Mulken 1996); or at least languages of strongly Western-influenced cultures, such as Hebrew (Blum-Kulka & House 1989). And in fact, the relatively few studies on requests by native speakers of non-European languages do not produce the same finding with the same consistency.[7] So the present finding that native Indonesians favour query preparatory requests over other types appears to confirm the importance of this strategy across languages.

To some extent, however, this finding might reflect the nature of the sample group of Indonesians in this study. Wierzbicka (1991: 30-37) argues that the very strong preference of Australian English speakers for query preparatory requests is linked to specific values that prevail in Australian culture, namely, a strong egalitarian ethos and a strong concern with individual autonomy - cultural values that are directly at odds with values normally attributed to Indonesian society.[8] These Indonesian subjects, however, who are studying at a university in Australia and hence are uniformly well-educated, middle-class, and familiar with Western culture, are likely to identify more with Western cultural values than the 'average' Indonesian. Thus, their preference for query preparatory requests might partly reflect the cultural ethos of a small 'elite' Indonesian sub-culture.[9] This, in turn, has wider implications for cross-cultural pragmatics. In developing countries where a highly educated, urban middle-class 'elite' has emerged, striking differences will probably exist in the speech act behaviour of different speakers that directly reflect the extent to which their cultural orientation is 'Western' vs 'traditional'. This claim is supported by Apte's (1974) finding that whether a speaker of Hindi or Marathi expresses thanks verbally in everyday interaction, and how frequently, depends directly on the extent to which he or she identifies with traditional cultural values versus Western ones.

An interesting finding is the low frequency of hints in the study. It has been asserted by anthropologists (Geertz 1976: 242-43; Mulder 1989: 51) that an ethos of indirectness exists in Javanese culture, and that requests are often made by means of hints by speakers of Javanese. Moreover, this writer has sometimes observed Indonesians from Java to employ hints, both in Bahasa Indonesian and in English, to make requests which (it intuitively seemed) would tend to be made more directly in native English. And Margaret

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[7]   While Fukishima (1966) confirms the finding for Japanese native speakers, Mandarin speakers in one study (Lee-Wong 1994) and Vietnamese speakers (Nguyen 1990) clearly appear to favour direct requests instead.

[8]   Indonesian society is generally regarded as distinctly *non*-egalitarian and highly conscious of status differences (cf. Geertz 1976; Mulder 1989; Draine & Hall 1990; T.I.F.L. Project 1994; Quinn 1996a), and as placing strong value on group membership, rather than individual autonomy (cf. Draine & Hall 1990: 124; T.I.F.L. Project 1994).

[9]   The thanking behaviour of these Indonesians strongly supports the contention that they are influenced in their speech act behaviour by Western norms. They express verbal thanks very consistently in situations in which they are offered or given goods, services, or information; or done small favours, by a variety of interlocutors (Hassall 1996). This seems surprising in view of the numerous anecdotal reports (cf. also Soenarso 1988: 31) that Indonesians do not express verbal thanks nearly as often as Australians do in everyday interaction, and do not thank, for instance, in routine service encounters. It seems probable that these subjects thank so frequently in Indonesian due to influence from English-speaking culture - a claim consistent with Quinn's assertion that the frequency of *terima kasih* 'thank you' in Indonesian seems to be rising, "probably under the influence of Anglo-American practice" (Quinn 1996b: 152).

Dufon (personal communication), similarly, has observed a tendency for Indonesians from Java to interpret 'innocent' remarks made in Bahasa Indonesia as requests. All this suggests that Indonesians - particularly ones with a Javanese background (as with almost all these subjects) - are likely to use hints frequently when requesting. It may be that the request situations in the present study are not 'sensitive' enough to reveal this tendency. Or, it may be that the data elicitation method discouraged a hinting strategy. Actually, there is some empirical evidence that the oral roleplay method *can* reveal a preference for hinting strategies: Zhang finds that while in written tasks Chinese learners of English make relatively direct requests (Zhang 1995a), in oral role plays they tend to elicit offers by means of hints instead (Zhang 1995b). Moreover, precautions were taken to conceal the exact focus of the present study (see above). Nevertheless, it is possible that these subjects realised requests were being studied and felt obliged to make a 'real' request; that is, an 'on-record' one (cf. Brown & Levinson 1978, 1987), to meet the expectations of the researcher.

That finding that the Indonesian subjects use direct questions to ask for information is interesting, particularly in the light of the generally observed ethos of indirectness in Indonesian social interaction. This is especially true if we compare it with a study by Blum-Kulka, Danet and Gherson (1985). They find that even though Israeli speech act behaviour in general is characterised by an ethos of directness, native speakers of Hebrew opt for conventionally *in*direct strategies when asking for information. Moreover, these authors imply that the use of indirect strategies in asking for information is to be expected, as this act by its nature consists of two elements: a genuine question about an unknown fact and a request to be told that fact (Blum-Kulka et al 1985: 130).

Accepting that point of view for a moment, the prefacing moves that Indonesian subjects frequently use before direct questions (Hassall 1997) can perhaps be seen as a means of fulfilling this norm. This is illustrated in (23) below:

> (23) (asking a stranger for directions to the post office)
> ....
> S: *Bisa   nanya   ini   Bu?*
>   Can   ask   this   mother
> P: *Hm   [mm*
>   hm   mm
> S: *uh] (.) kantor pos   utama di   mana   ya?*
>   uh   office post   main   LOC   where yes
>
> ....
> S: 'Can I ask you something?'
> P: 'Mm   [hm'
> S: 'Uh, where's the main post office?'

In (23) above, while the question element is located in the main utterance itself (*Di mana kantor pos utama…?* 'Where's the main post office…?'), the request element could be said to be located in the prefacing move: *Bisa nanya ini…?* 'Can I ask you something?' Thus, the claim by theoreticians (e.g. Gordon & Lakoff 1971: 64) that the logical form of a question is that of a 'request to tell' may indeed tend to be reflected in speech acts across

languages by one means or another. However, this analysis seems to beg the question of why speakers should choose to make a request, rather than simply ask a question, in the first place - especially in a culture (like Israel) where an ethos of directness prevails. And indeed, Blum-Kulka et al (1985) acknowledge that situation-specific factors may have prompted their Israeli subjects to opt for indirect Asking strategies. Also, it seems important (although not mentioned by Blum-Kulka et al 1985) that *all* Hebrew native subjects in an earlier study (Blum-Kulka 1983: 50) used a direct question to ask for information. This suggests that direct questions may indeed be the norm in asking for information in Hebrew. And the behaviour of the Indonesian subjects in the present study, moreover, points to the likelihood that direct questions will be the dominant means of asking for information in most languages.

6. Conclusion

This study of requests by Indonesians has a number of implications for cross-cultural pragmatics. It supports the contention that requests across many languages of diverse cultures are performed by highly similar strategies and sub-strategies. While it provides broad support for Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) model of linguistic politeness, it also suggests that use of hints, specifically, may not be accurately predicted by that model. It supports the claim that the query preparatory strategy is an important means of requesting across many languages, while raising the possibility of a sharp divergence between the speech act performance of Western-oriented and traditional speakers within many non-Western cultures. Lastly, it challenges the notion that an indirect request is the inherently natural means of asking for information, and suggests that direct questions are likely to be the dominant means of asking for information in most languages.

Appendix A

Abbreviations and symbols used in the transcriptions

INT   interrogative
LIG   ligature
LOC   locative marker
MP   modal particle
PASS   passive
?   rising intonation.
.   falling intonation
(.)   pause of less than one second
(1.0)   pause of at least one second and less than two seconds
……   omitted material

Appendix B

The roleplay situations

Request situations

1. ask the shop assistant in a music store to let you listen to a cassette
2. ask the hotel receptionist to lend you a pen to fill in the registration form
3. ask a post office clerk to sell you two envelopes and stamps for letters to Australia.
4. ask a conductor on a city bus to let you know when you get to your stop
5. ask a lecturer during class for a copy of last week's handout which you did not receive
6. ask a university classmate to let you look on at their textbook during a class
7. ask the ticket seller in a cinema for a ticket for the film "Four Seasons", AND
8. ask to be able to sit in the middle front of the cinema
9. ask a bank teller to change a large banknote into smaller notes
10. ask a stranger in a park for a light for your cigarette
11. ask a stranger in a crowded eating stall to move over a little so you can sit down too
12. ask a hotel servant to have your dirty clothes washed
13. ask a magazine seller at a street stall for a copy of the magazine "Tempo"
14. ask a friend from your residential college whom you see at the shops for a lift home
    to college on their motor scooter
15. ask a university classmate to lend you a pen during a class
16. ask a friend while watching TV together to pass over some magazines which are beside him
    or her.
17. ask the manager of a clothes store to allow you to exchange a shirt you bought yesterday for
    one of a different colour
18. ask a waiter in a restaurant to give you a menu
AND
19. order a meal
20. order a drink from a waiter in a restaurant
21. ask your university lecturer for an extension on an essay deadline
22. ask a taxi driver to stop for a minute so you can buy cigarettes
23. ask the assistant in a shoe shoe to let you try on a pair of shoes
24. ask the official at the immigration office to give you the necessary forms to apply for
    a visa extension

Asking situations

1. ask a stranger on a railway platform if the train that has just arrived goes to Bandung
2. ask the conductor during a long coach journey when the coach will arrive in Denpasar
3. ask a police officer at the police station where to go to report your lost passport
4. ask a stranger in the street for directions to the Post Office
5. ask a stranger in the street for directions to the Language Centre

Non-request ('distractor') situations

1. a classmate offers to lend you a little money when you lose your wallet
2. a street vendor tries to sell you a newspaper which you do not want
3. a new acquaintance tells you that you speak Indonesian well
4. a shop assistant in a pharmacy hands you your parcel and asks you if you want anything else
5. a stranger gives you your umbrella that you left behind on a park bench
6. a taxi driver stops at your destination, and when you pay, gives you your change
7. your lecturer offers to lend you a book to help with an essay you are writing
8. a hotel porter carries your bags to your room, and asks if you want anything else
9. a friend gives you a music cassette as a gift

Appendix C

Assessment of social variables by native Bahasa Indonesia informants (n=15)

-The first number in each cell is a ranking (e.g. 6= means that respondents ranked this situation equal 6th highest out of the 26 ranked situations].
-The number in brackets is the mean raw score (e.g. 3.47 means that on a five-point scale, with lowest possible value of 1.00 and highest of 5.00, respondents awarded a mean score of 3.47).
- Key: R1) = Request situation No 1
           A1) = Asking situation No 1

	Status of S (in relation to H)	size of imposition	how comfortable making request
Request situation			
R1) ask to listen to cassette in store	9 (3.40)	14= (3.20)	8= (3.47)
R2) borrow pen from hotel receptionist	4= (3.60)	26= (2.73)	2 (3.73)
R3) buy stamps, envelopes in PO	12= (3.13)	5= (3.47)	1 (3.80)
R4) ask conductor to tell right stop	6= (3.47)	1 (3.67)	10 (3.27)
R5) ask lecturer for last week's handout	25 (2.40)	5= (3.47)	25 (2.33)
R6) ask to look on at textbook in class	22 (2.67)	5= (3.47)	23 (2.47)
R7,8) buy cinema ticket for middle-front row	4= (3.60)	12= (3.27)	11= (3.20)
R9) change large note in bank	19= (2.87)	12= (3.27)	17= (2.87)
R10) ask stranger for a light	21 (2.73)	23= (2.87)	15 (3.00)
R11) ask stranger to move over in eating stall	24 (2.53)	2= (3.60)	21= (2.53)
R12) ask hotel servant to have clothes washed	1 (3.80)	10 (3.40)	3= (3.67)
R13) buy magazine from stall owner	6= (3.47)	19= (3.00)	3= (3.67)
R14) ask friend for lift home	16= (2.93)	11 (3.33)	17= (2.87)
R15) borrow pen in class	16= (2.93)	14= (3.20)	11= (3.20)
R16) ask friend to pass magazines	15= (3.00)	19= (3.00)	7 (3.53)
R17) ask store manager to exchange shirt	12= (3.13)	2= (3.60)	24 (2.40)
R18, 19) ask for menu, order meal	6= (3.47)	19= (3.00)	8= (3.47)
R20) order drink in restaurant	2= (3.67)	22= (2.93)	3= (3.67)
R21) ask for essay extension	26 (1.73)	5= (3.47)	26 (1.93)
R22) stop taxi to buy cigarettes	11 (3.33)	16= (3.13)	20 (2.73)
R23) ask to try on shoes in store	2= (3.67)	18 (3.07)	21= (2.53)
R24) ask official for forms for visa	19= (2.87)	16= (3.13)	11= (3.20)
A1) ask stranger if train goes to Bandung	16= (2.93)	23= (2.87)	16 (2.93)
A2) ask coach conductor when arrive in Denpasar	4= (3.60)	25 (2.80)	3= (3.67)
A3) ask police officer where to report lost passport	14 (3.00)	5= (3.47)	14 (3.07)
A4, 5) ask directions in street	23 (2.60)	4 (3.53)	17= (2.87)

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