

Interlanguage Request Modification

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John Benjamins Publishing Company

Amsterdam / Philadelphia



The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences - Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Interlanguage request modification / edited by Maria Economidou-Kogetsidis, Helen Woodfield.

p. cm. (Pragmatics & Beyond New Series, ISSN 0922-842X ; v. 217)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Interlanguage (Language learning). I. Economidou-Kogetsidis, Maria.
II. Woodfield, Helen.

P53 .J51936 2012

401/.45--dc23

ISBN 978 90 272 5622 5 (Hb ; alk. paper)

2011053057

ISBN 978 90 272 7472 4 (Eb)

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John Benjamins Publishing Co. · P.O. Box 36224 · 1020 ME Amsterdam · The Netherlands
John Benjamins North America · P.O. Box 27519 · Philadelphia PA 19118-0519 · USA

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Request modification by Australian learners of Indonesian*

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The study examines how Australian adult learners of Indonesian modify their requests. It uses interactive roleplay data. The learners use virtually no internal modifiers on two of three request types, apparently due to lack of knowledge of the most common L2 internal modifiers. They do use supportive moves, but are largely restricted to grounders, seeming not to know about the prefaces which Indonesians use to support their direct questions. The grounders which the learners produce are often strikingly lengthy. The study argues that the twin features of scant internal modification and abundant external modifiers are likely to characterise second language speech acts. The study challenges the theoretical claim that the task of acquiring new knowledge itself is a relatively small one for learners of L2 pragmatics.

1. Introduction

This study examines how Australian learners in a foreign language setting modify their requests in Indonesian (*bahasa Indonesia*) in everyday situations. To a lesser extent it examines how they develop in their ability to modify those requests, with increased proficiency.

Studies of second language speech acts performance tend to focus on learners' choice of strategy (e.g. Blum-Kulka 1982, 1983; Olshtain & Weinbach 1987; Weizman 1993; Bilbow 1995; le Pair 1996; Rinnert & Kobayashi 1999; Chen & Chen 2007; Schauer 2008). This is only one factor that determines the pragmatic effect of the speech act, another being the use of optional modifiers (cf. Faerch & Kasper 1989). By closely comparing how learners and L2 native speakers modify requests, this study aims to help provide a more complete picture of second

* Sections of this paper appeared in an article by the author titled "Modifying requests in a second language", in IRAL (International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching), vol. 39, pp. 259–283 (2001). I am grateful to de Gruyter, Mouton for their permission to use that material in the present chapter.

language speech act performance. In particular, it aims to help answer these questions: Do second language learners tend to perform "bare" realisations of speech acts; that is, ones devoid of internal modifiers? Do they tend to support these bare speech acts by frequent and lengthy supportive moves? And to the extent that L2 learners *do* do those two things, why do they do them? In addition, the study aims to help answer this question raised by Bialystok (1993): to what extent is the task of acquiring L2 pragmatic proficiency a task of acquiring new pragmatic knowledge itself?

2. Background

2.1 Pragmatic acquisition

A two-dimensional model of pragmatic acquisition is proposed by Bialystok (1993). She argues that acquiring knowledge is of relatively minor importance for adult L2 learners of pragmatics – unlike for children acquiring their first language. While those adults must acquire a certain amount of knowledge, in the form of an increasingly explicit understanding of L2 pragmatic features, the crucial process for them is acquiring control over attention to knowledge already available to them (e.g. as universal knowledge: see e.g. Blum-Kulka 1991; Kasper & Rose 2002). They generally produce inappropriate utterances not because their knowledge is 'deviant' but because they cannot access it rapidly enough to use it when they need it. This claim of Bialystok (1993) that acquiring knowledge is itself a relatively minor task has yet to be verified empirically. Of the few studies which evaluate that claim on the basis of their own empirical findings, one broadly supports it (a study of L2 choice of request strategy by Hassall 2003), while two developmental studies emphasise the large amount of new knowledge that the L2 adult learner subjects did need to acquire: a study of L2 requests, offers and refusals of offers (Barron 2003) and a study of L2 leave-taking (Hassall 2006). That model of Bialystok (1993) will be evaluated in the light of findings from this study.

2.2 Modifiers

The notion of a speech act modifier can be illustrated with reference to a native Indonesian request from the data, as follows. A customer asks a shop manager if he can exchange a shirt he bought yesterday. First, the customer gives a reason for the request: *Saya pakai tapi nggak cocok itu*. 'I tried the shirt on but it didn't suit me'. This is a supportive move, i.e. an external modifier, which is outside the "request proper" and indirectly modifies its pragmatic effect (cf. Faerch & Kasper 1989). The speaker then utters the request proper: *Bisa saya ganti warnanya*,

Pak? 'Can I change the colour, father?' This is the 'head act', which can realise the request independently of other elements (CCSARP 1989). Within this head act is one element added primarily to convey interpersonal meaning: a polite term of address, *Pak* (literally *father*). This is an internal modifier. An internal modifier which softens the impositive force of the request, such as this modifier *Pak*, is a "downgrading" internal modifier (cf. House & Kasper 1981; Faerch & Kasper 1989). (An 'upgrading' internal modifier is one which aggravates or intensifies the force of a request; for example, the word "bloody," in "Clean up that bloody mess." No upgrading modifiers occur in the present data). Internal modifiers can further be usefully classified as either lexical/phrasal or syntactic modifiers. Examples of lexical/phrasal modifiers are the politeness marker 'please', or the phrase 'a bit' (in 'Can you turn the music down *a bit*?', or a polite address term such as *Pak* 'father' above. An example of a syntactic modifier is the use of 'Could you...?', where the speaker encodes conditionality by using the modal verb form 'could' rather than 'can'.

2.3 Second language speech act performance

Several findings from previous research are relevant to this study. Intermediate or advanced learners of a second language have often been found to use few internal modifiers on speech acts compared to L2 native speakers. In a range of studies, they use fewer internal modifiers than L2 natives do on requests (Kasper 1981 (cited in House & Kasper 1987: 1253); Rintell 1981; Kasper 1982; House & Kasper 1987; Harlow 1990; Trosborg 1995; Woodfield 2008, this volume; Göy et al. this volume; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2009, this volume). Learners have also been observed to use few internal modifiers when making other speech acts, such as apologies (Olshtain & Cohen 1983; Trosborg 1995) and complaints (Kasper 1979; Trosborg 1995). In certain studies, however, learners do not display this feature. They use as many internal modifiers on requests as L2 native speakers do, or use even more (discussed later).

Second language learners have been said to produce lengthy speech act realisations compared to L2 native speakers (cf. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1986). An aspect of this behaviour is that they sometimes use frequent and lengthy supportive moves. In one large and well-known study of learner pragmatic performance, the CCSARP (Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project), intermediate and advanced learners of a variety of first language backgrounds supported their (written) requests by lengthy justifications and explanations (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1986; House & Kasper 1987; Faerch & Kasper 1989; Blum-Kulka 1991). On the speech act of apologising, too, learners in that project used more supportive moves than L2 native speakers (House 1988). Greek learners of English in another

study have also been found to support their L2 requests somewhat more heavily than L2 native subjects (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2009). This learner trait is often referred to in negative terms such as 'verbosity' or support which is 'excessive' – labels which suggest it creates an inappropriate effect. However, House & Kasper (2000) argue that it does not necessarily create such an effect, saying:

Whether learners' tendency to ground their requests more extensively is actually perceived as a violation of the maxim of quantity [...] is questionable. [...] NNS's 'overuse' of supportive moves might go unnoticed, and even if noticed, it is unlikely to be perceived as disruptive or puzzling. (2000: 105)

Moreover, not all studies support the claim that second language learners do produce lengthy speech acts. Notably, studies of *oral* discourse by L2 learners have not revealed lengthy speech act performance, as pointed out by Edmondson and House (1991:279). Fairly advanced German learners of English in oral roleplays in the Bochum study used a similar amount of support on requests as L2 native subjects (Edmondson & House 1991:279). Otcu and Zeyrek (2008) find both lower and higher intermediate level Turkish learners of English to use external modifiers at similar frequencies to English native subjects when making roleplay requests. Woodfield (this volume) finds advanced mixed-nationality learners of English to use external modifiers with similar frequency to English native speakers. And Trosborg (1995) finds intermediate and advanced Danish learners of English in oral roleplays to markedly underuse supportive moves compared to L2 native speakers on both requests and complaints, and to a lesser degree on apologies as well.

2.4 Request sub-strategies

The three request sub-strategies on which modification will be examined in the present study are briefly described below.

2.4.1 *The query preparatory modal request*

The speaker uses a relevant modal verb to ask what is – on the face of it – a question about ability or permission, but which is in fact a formulaic request. Examples are (1), (2) and (3) below (in data examples 'N' stands for native speaker of Indonesian and 'L' for learner of Indonesian).

- (1) (asking a stranger to move over in a crowded eating stall)
 N: [...] *bisa bergeser sedikit Mas*
 can move;INT a.little brother
 'Can you move over a little, brother?'
 [= question about hearer's ability]

- (2) (a new hotel guest asks to borrow a pen from a hotel receptionist to fill in the registration form)

N: [...] *bisa pinjem (.) bolpoin-nya?*

can borrow pen-the

'Can I borrow the pen?'

[= question about speaker's ability]

- (3) ('hotel guest' situation above)

L: [...] *boleh (.) saya meminjam bolpoin*

may I borrow;TR; pen

'May I borrow a pen?'

[= question about speaker's permission]

2.4.2 Imperative

This is a highly direct sub-strategy, which derives its requestive force from the grammatical mood itself. An example is (4) below:

- (4) *Tolong cucikan pakaian saya yang kotor.*

help wash;BEN clothing my REL dirty

'Please wash my dirty clothes.'

2.4.3 Direct question

For requesting in general, a question is *not* a direct sub-strategy. However, in the case of a request for information, a direct question is the most direct sub-strategy of all.¹ Examples:

- (5) (asking where the post office is)

Di mana kantor pos?

LOC where office post

'Where is the post office?'

- (6) (asking a stranger if the train that just pulled in goes to Bandung)

Apa kereta ini yang ke Bandung Mas ya?

Q train this REL to Bandung brother yes

'Is this train the one to Bandung, brother?'

1. This notion of a direct question is difficult to define rigorously (see Edmondson & House 1981:195 for discussion). However, a sufficiently clear intuitive idea of what is meant by a direct question can be gained through contrast with other interrogative request forms. Compare for example: 'Where's the post office?' [= direct question]; 'Can I ask where the post office is?' [hedged performative request]; 'Can you tell me where the Post Office is?' [query preparatory request]; 'Is the Post Office far from here?' [= hint].

- (7) (asking a coach conductor during a long journey how much longer until the coach arrives at Denpasar).

Berapa jam sih ke Denpasar?
 how.many hour PARTICLE to Denpasar
 'How many hours to Denpasar?'

This sub-strategy of direct question is examined only in those situations where the goal of the request is information.

3. Method

3.1 Subjects

Learner subjects comprise 20 students undertaking an undergraduate degree programme in Indonesian at an Australian university. Most (13/20) were in the third year level of the Indonesian programme, while the others (7/20) were in the second year level. All were native speakers of Australian English, and all were in the 18–24 age group except one (who was approximately 35 years old). Thirteen were female and seven were male. Around half of them (11/20) had previously studied Indonesian at high school, for periods ranging from two years to four years. While no test of language proficiency was undertaken on the subjects, their oral proficiency can be characterised as intermediate, with considerable range in proficiency from lower to upper intermediate.

All of the learner subjects except two had visited Indonesia, to travel or to undertake a short (one-month) language course, and a few of them had visited Indonesia more than once. However, none had spent more than two months in Indonesia on any one occasion. The median time subjects had spent in Indonesia was one month. Therefore, it can be assumed that their Indonesian had been learned largely through formal instruction at university and, in the case of some subjects, at high school. They can thus be characterised as foreign language learners.

While this study is not primarily a developmental one, when a feature of the learners' requesting behaviour clearly varies with their proficiency level, that is discussed. Three of the second year subjects, two male and one female, stood out very clearly as possessing low linguistic proficiency. These three learners will be referred to as the Low group when singled out for attention. Two of the third year learners, by contrast, were clearly conspicuous for their relatively high linguistic proficiency. They can be assessed as clearly upper-intermediate in oral proficiency. These two learners will be referred to as the High group. The remaining 15 learners in the study, not selected as Low or High, when referred to, will be called the Middle group.

Indonesian native speaker subjects comprise 18 students studying degree programmes 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: almost all were either from the main island of Java or had spent a large part of their life in Java.

3.2 Procedure

The data were collected by means of interactive oral roleplay, a method frequently employed in empirical studies of pragmatics (cf. Kasper & Dahl 1991; Kasper & Rose 2002). Twenty six request situations were selected. Each subject performed 14 or 15 of these situations with an Indonesian native speaking partner, on the basis of a written cue; as well as a number of non-request or 'distractor' situations (cf. Olshtain & Cohen 1983: 31). All role plays were audio-recorded.

For the use of modifiers to be validly examined the type of strategy must be held constant as an independent variable (cf. Faerch & Kasper 1989: 222). Therefore modification is examined separately on three strategies in turn. The strategy selected for primary examination is the query preparatory modal – the type of request used most commonly by both the learner and Indonesian subjects (see Hassall 1997, 1999, 2003). In order to further increase validity of comparisons, modification is examined only in situations where this strategy is used with reasonable frequency by both groups (cf. Faerch & Kasper 1989: 223): defined for present purposes as by 30% or more of subjects. This produces data from eleven request situations (listed in Appendix 1), which represent the majority of requests of this type produced by both groups (61/98 of those by learners and 65/99 of those by Indonesian natives). Modification is then separately examined on two less frequently-used strategies (imperatives and direct questions), as that data reveal important new facets of the Australian learners' behaviour.

3.3 Judgments of appropriateness

The appropriateness of learners' modifiers in this study was determined through discussion with Indonesian native informants. In any instance when a subject's use or non-use of modification was of questionable appropriateness, at least two native speaker informants were shown a written version of the relevant extract of the data (with precise specification of the situation in which it occurred) and were asked to comment on it. If necessary, the informants were then asked further questions which directed their attention specifically to the appropriateness of the feature in question, in order to obtain the relevant judgments.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Modification of query preparatory requests

4.1.1 Internal modification: Findings

Indonesian native subjects use internal modifiers in most of their query preparatory requests (67.7% or 44/65 of instances). The Australian learners, however, rarely use internal modifiers. Only 6.6% (or 4/61) of their requests of this type are modified internally (see Table 1).

Table 1. Proportion of subjects' query preparatory (QP) requests which are internally modified*

	Learners (total requests = 61)		Indon. native speakers (total requests = 65)	
	n	%	n	%
QP requests with one internal modifier	4	6.6	31	47.7
QP requests with > 1 internal modifier	–	–	13	20.0
Total internally modified QP requests	4	6.6	44	67.7

* data are based on eleven situations in which query preparatory modal requests are used relatively frequently (30% or more of subjects) by both groups.

The most common internal modifier used by Indonesian native subjects is the Negator (cf. CCSARP 1989: 281), consisting of the lexical modifier *nggak*, or occasionally *ndak* (both of which are informal equivalents of *no/not*). This modifier is used in over a third (35.4% or 23/65) of their requests. Learner subjects, however, never use the Negator (see Table 2). Examples of the Negator are (8) and (9) below:

- (8) (asking a friend from college for a lift home)

N: [...] *bisa ikut nggak*
can come.too NEG

'Can I come too, or not?'

- (9) (asking a taxi driver to stop for a minute)

N: [...] *kita bisa berhenti ndak beli rokok* [...]
we can stop;INT NEG buy cigarette

'Can we stop, or not, to buy cigarettes?'

This negating element conveys a certain degree of 'polite pessimism' (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987) about the likelihood of the request being granted, by explicitly raising the possibility of non-fulfillment of the necessary condition: the hearer's

ability or willingness. This makes it easier for the hearer to refuse the request by offering him or her a 'way out' and in this way functions to reduce the coerciveness of the utterance.²

Table 2. Proportion of subjects' query preparatory requests which contain each type of internal modifier*

Type of internal modifier	Learners (total requests = 61)		Indonesian natives (total requests = 65)	
	n	%	n	%
Negator (<i>nggak</i> or <i>ndak</i> 'no/not')	–	–	23	35.4
Kin term of address (<i>Pak</i> 'father' etc)	–	–	13	20.0
Appealer (<i>ya</i> 'yes')	1	1.6	6	9.2
Understater (e.g. <i>sedikit</i> 'a little')	3	4.9	9	13.8
Other	–	–	6	9.2

Another internal modifier used quite frequently on requests by Indonesian native subjects is a fictitious kinship term of address (henceforth kin term). This modifier is used in 20% (or 13/65) of their requests. Learners, however, never use a kin term as a modifier (see Table 2). Examples of the kin term are (10) and (11) below:

- (10) (asking a taxi driver to stop)
 N: [...] *bisa berhenti sebentar Pak* [...] [
 can stop;INT a.short.time father
 'Can we stop for a minute, father?']
- (11) (asking a store manager to exchange a shirt)
 N: [...] *bisa diganti nggak Bu* [
 can change;PASS NEG mother
 'Can I change it or not, mother?']

All the four kin terms used by Indonesian native subjects in the present data; namely, *Pak* 'father', *Bu* 'mother', *Mas* 'brother' and *Mbak* 'sister', have a positive

2. While most Indonesian native informants agreed that this negating element in query preparatory requests had the politeness function proposed above, this opinion was not unanimous. One informant felt that its function was to convey clarity rather than politeness. She suggested that the negating element in requests (e.g. *Bisa duduk di sini nggak* 'Can I sit here (or) not?') functions to present two options to the hearer very explicitly, something like the effect of the English *or not* in the same context, but without the tone of slight impatience which the latter tends to convey.

politeness function, as markers of in-group identity (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987: 107). They convey some degree of intimacy by metaphorically including the addressee within the family of the speaker (cf. Jenson 1988: 127). In addition, the two terms *Pak* 'father' and *Bu* 'mother' can convey negative politeness as well (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987), because they clearly convey respect for the addressee, by virtue of his or her position or age (cf. Johns 1977; Sneddon et al. 2010). So those two kin terms may convey politeness in more than one way.

Another internal modifier used sometimes by Indonesian native subjects also accounts for nearly all those used by the learners (see Table 2). This is the understater (cf. CCSARP 1989). This modifier minimises the extent of the favour being asked in order to make it seem less of an imposition on the hearer. An example is (12) below:

- (12) (asking a stranger to move over in a crowded eating stall)
 L: [...] *bisa-kah Anda(.) bergeser(.) sedikit?*
 can-Q you move;INT a.little
 'Can you move over a little?'

All of the understaters used by learners and most of those used by Indonesian natives were of the identical type illustrated in (12) above: the use of *sedikit* 'a little' in asking a stranger to move over in a crowded eating stall. The inclusion of this modifier was probably influenced by the written description of this situation, which specified that if the stranger moved *sedikit* 'a little' there would be room to sit down, so the relatively high frequency of understaters in the data may have been influenced by role-play cues.

The only other internal modifier used in any number on requests by Indonesian native subjects is an appealer (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989): the element *ya* 'yes'. Indonesians use this modifier in 9.2% (or 6/65) of their requests. It also accounts for the single other instance of an internal modifier by a learner. An example of an appealer is (13) below:

- (13) (asking hotel receptionist for a pen to fill in registration form)
 N: [...] *bisa pinjam bolpoin ya?*
 can borrow pen yes
 'Can I borrow a pen, yes?'

This element *ya* 'yes' parallels the *nggak* 'no' modifier (above) in structure, and to some extent in function. It makes the force of the request softer by drawing the addressee into agreement with the speaker (cf. Johns 1977: 276; Sneddon et al. 2010: 337), serving as a positive politeness strategy (Brown & Levinson 1987: 112).

Indonesian native subjects often exploit their relatively narrow repertoire of internal modifiers by combining different types. In a sizeable proportion (20% or

13/65) of their requests, they use *more* than one type of internal modifier. This creates an effect of greater effort to make the request acceptable to the hearer. Learners, however, never use more than a single internal modifier in a request (see Table 1) – in line with Economidou-Kogetsidis (this volume), who noted a striking lack of such multiple marking by her Greek Cypriot learners of English.

4.1.2 *Lack of internal modification by the learners on query preparatory requests: Discussion*

The lack of internal modifiers by these learners on their query preparatory requests is consistent with most previous findings (see earlier). The first question it raises is whether it makes their Indonesian requests inappropriate. Certainly, looked at overall, this feature is strikingly different from L2 native behaviour. But this does not mean that it produces non-L2-like behaviour in the individual instances in which it occurs. There do not appear to be any situations in this study where it is considered obligatory to use internal modification, either in general, or of a particular type. Even in situations where Indonesian native subjects use internal modifiers frequently in their requests, it will regularly happen that one or more of these native Indonesians use none at all, and informants will consider this to be within the range of acceptable requesting behaviour. And even in the few situations where *all* Indonesian native subjects internally modify their requests, the 'bare' requests produced by learners are still judged by informants to be an acceptable alternative.

However, the apparent lack of internal modifying resources by learners greatly limits their options for making requests. While Indonesian natives have the choice of whether to internally modify, the learners by and large seem restricted to one part of the L2 native repertoire: the option of zero modification.

It is clear that the low level of internal modification by these learners cannot be explained through first language influence. Studies consistently show native Australian English speakers to use one or more downgrading modifiers regularly on their query preparatory requests, in a wide range of situations (Tanaka 1986, 1988; Nguyen 1990; Blum-Kulka 1991). Evidence from British English, too, confirms this finding (House & Kasper 1987; Aijmer 1996). Particularly common modifiers by English native speakers as evidenced by the studies above are the lexical/phrasal downgraders 'please', 'I was wondering', 'do you think', and 'perhaps'/'possibly'; and also the syntactic downgrader 'can' → 'could'. Common combinations include: 'Could I/you please...?', 'Could I/you possibly...?', and 'I was wondering if I could...?'.

It seems to be inherently difficult for second language learners to add internal modifiers. This is suggested, implicitly at least, by Trosborg (1995). Adding lexical or phrasal internal modifiers to a bare head act is likely to increase the complexity of the pragmalinguistic structure (Trosborg 1995: 428–429). This means that extra

processing effort will be required so that learners – who are likely to lack automatic control over even bare pragmalinguistic routines and have to invest effort in producing them – may not be able to add modifiers to them easily. Other studies, too, find that the relative structural complexity of L2 pragmatic features affects the path by which learners acquire L2 pragmatics (e.g. Barron 2003, 2007; Nguyen 2008). Thus the ‘complexification hypothesis’ proposed for L2 grammar, whereby structures that demand a high degree of processing capacity are acquired relatively late, seems important for L2 pragmatics as well.

Interestingly, a small number of studies find intermediate or advanced learners to use as many or even more internal modifiers than native speakers in requests (Blum-Kulka & Levenston 1987; House & Kasper 1987; Faerch & Kasper 1989). However, it is significant that all these are studies in which subjects produce *written* requests. The processing task is much reduced for learners by allowing them to write their requests, as they have time to think, and so learners in those studies may manage to use complex structures that they have not mastered well enough to draw on in spoken discourse.

In the present study, the lack of internal modifiers almost certainly has other causes as well. Almost none of the most common downgraders in the learners’ first language are readily transferable to Indonesian. Either these modifiers have no formal and functional equivalent in Indonesian, or if there is one, these FL learners are unlikely to know that it is equivalent due to their lack of exposure to a target culture setting. While the English politeness marker ‘please’ on query preparatory requests does have a close equivalent in Indonesian, *tolong*, this marker is taught to these learners in their main textbook (Johns 1977:235) as a marker of imperatives only, and learners are not told that it means ‘please’. Instead, the construction of ‘*Tolong* + Imperative’ is glossed as ‘Would you mind -ing?’ (Johns 1977:234). So these learners are unlikely to know that this marker can be used to mitigate query preparatory requests and would not perceive it as equivalent to ‘please’ in such contexts. Neither is there an Indonesian formal equivalent of the English syntactic modifier ‘can’ → ‘could’, as there is no syntactic means in Indonesian of encoding conditionality in the modal verb. In addition, the Indonesian formal equivalent of the English downgrader ‘I wonder/I was wondering’ (namely, *Saya ingin tahu* ‘I want/wanted to know’) does not conventionally function as a downgrader of requests. In fact, of the common English downgraders on query preparatory requests, it seems that only the Hedging device ‘possibly’/‘perhaps’ has a formal equivalent in Indonesian (*barangkali* or *mungkin*) which can be used with the same function as in English *and* whose equivalency might be readily perceived by these learners.

A complementary obstacle is that the most common internal modifiers in Indonesian are not available through first language pragmatic knowledge.

The most common one, the 'negator', has no formal and functional equivalent in English. The English formal equivalent, the tag 'or not?', is not conventionally used with downgrading function on English query preparatory requests. Instead, if used on this request type it tends to produce an effect of slight asperity or impatience. While the respectful kin terms of address (*Ba*)*pak* 'father' and (*I*)*bu* 'mother' do have rough formal and functional equivalents in English; namely 'Sir' and 'Madam', these English terms of address differ importantly from their Indonesian counterparts in frequency of use. While these two Indonesian kin terms are very common, the terms 'Sir' and 'Madam' are now rarely heard in Australia. Therefore these learners cannot use (*Ba*)*pak* and (*I*)*bu* to modify requests on the basis of first language pragmatic knowledge. All this suggests that acquiring new pragmatic knowledge is a major task for adult learners of a second language – perhaps a larger task than suggested by the acquisitional model of Bialystok (1993).

The assumption that these learners even *want* to use internal modifiers on their Indonesian requests merits discussion. If we assume for the moment that they plan their Indonesian requests by analogy with English query preparatory request forms, they might not be aware that the English forms routinely contain internal modifiers. Faerch and Kasper (1989) argue that internal modifiers, unlike supportive moves, are largely unconsciously used. As they put it:

[F]rom a psycholinguistic point of view one can assume that native speakers use them with little conscious attention, precisely because they are void routines [...] that do not contribute to the propositional development of the discourse. (1989: 243)

Therefore these learners may plan their Indonesian requests on the basis of an equivalent English utterance but 'ignore' the internal modifiers in the underlying English utterance during this process of verbal planning because they do not notice them.

The way these learners have been taught Indonesian may also hide from them the fact that internal modifiers are desirable in Indonesian requests. Kasper (1982) makes this point with reference to German learners of English in the Bochum project. The expression of propositional meaning was given paramount importance in the foreign language instruction those German learners received, while little attention was devoted to contexts where the expression of interpersonal meaning was crucial, for example where face-threatening speech acts were performed. These Australian learners too, received traditional foreign language instruction which pays little regard to interpersonal functions of language. Mastery of grammar was emphasised in the first year and study of expository and literary texts in later years. So like the learners in Kasper's (1982) study, they probably generalise about the primacy of referential meaning to other contexts too.

4.1.3 External modification of query preparatory requests: Findings

Both Indonesian native and learner subjects use supportive moves on the majority of their query preparatory requests. The learners support much the same proportion of their requests as Indonesian natives do (68.9% or 42/61 of their requests compared with 60.0% or 39/65 by Indonesians: see Table 3).

Table 3. Proportion of subjects' query preparatory (QP) requests which contain a supportive move*

	Learners (total requests = 61)		Indonesian natives (total requests = 65)	
	n	%	n	%
with 1 supportive move	37	60.7	20	30.8
with > 1 supportive move**	5	8.2	19	29.2
Total QP requests with supportive moves	42	68.9	39	60.0

* data are from eleven situations where query preparatory modal requests are used frequently (in at least 30% of head acts) by both groups.

** this category refers to use of more than one *type* of supportive move (e.g. to preface + grounder), not to multiple use of the same type (for example, grounder + grounder). For one thing, it proved impracticable to distinguish with validity between grounding sequences consisting of one elaborate grounder and those consisting of two or more separate grounders, and so all grounding sequences, regardless of length, are regarded as a single grounder.

Easily, the most common type of move employed by both native Indonesian and learner subjects is the grounder, in which a speaker gives reasons, explanations, or justifications for his or her request (CCSARP 1989: 287).³ Providing grounds, or reasons, for a request helps to make the request more polite. It can convey positive politeness by assuming the hearer's cooperation; by conveying the belief that the hearer will want to help once he or she can see why it is necessary (Brown & Levinson 1987: 128). It may also convey negative politeness by showing the hearer that you would not impose on him or her without a good reason (Brown & Levinson 1987: 189; see also House & Kasper 1987: 1281–1282).

3. The notion of a grounder is used broadly in the present study. It does not only refer to supportive *reasons*, strictly speaking, but also encompasses the type of move which House (1996, following Edmondson & House 1981) calls an "expander"; in which "the speaker [...] gives more details than required about the state of affairs raised in the main move, whenever these details are deemed to increase the likelihood of the interlocutor's fulfilling the speaker's intent" (House 1996: 234).

Learners use grounders slightly more frequently than Indonesian natives, supporting almost two-thirds (65.6% or 40/61) of their requests with this type of move (see Table 4). Like the Indonesian subjects, they use grounders quite consistently across the 11 selected request situations.

Table 4. Proportion of subjects' query preparatory requests which contain each type of supportive move

Type of supportive move	Learners (total requests = 61)		Indonesian natives (total requests = 65)	
	n	%	n	%
Grounder (i.e. giving grounds or justifications for the request)	40	65.6	34	52.3
Preface (e.g. <i>Begini Bu [...]</i> 'It's like this mother [...]', or <i>Begini Pak, saya punya masalah [...]</i> 'It's like this father, I've got a problem [...]	2	3.3	13	20.0
Others	6	9.8	13	20.0

Many grounders by learners are L2-native-like both in length and in choice of information. However, many others create a non-L2-like effect by the inclusion of information which could be regarded as redundant or overexplicit (and which in some cases might make the speaker sound over-insistent) – a feature also observed by Woodfield (this volume) in the grounders by her learners of English. This may take the form of repeated information, as in (14) below:

(14) (asking a taxi driver to stop so you can buy cigarettes)

L: [...] *saya mau membeli rokok* (.) *bisa*
I want buy;TR cigarette can

L: *um kita berhenti untuk* (.) *di toko untuk*
um we stop;INT for LOC shop for

L: *saya* (.) *membeli rokok itu?*
I buy;TR cigarette that

'I want to buy some cigarettes. Can we stop at a shop for me to buy those cigarettes?'

In (14) above, the first piece of grounding information, *Saya mau membeli rokok* 'I want to buy cigarettes' clearly conveys the speaker's reason for wanting to stop. This makes the second piece of grounding information, *untuk saya membeli rokok itu* 'for me to buy those cigarettes', seem redundant, so that the two grounding segments together create an overexplicit effect.

Another example of a learner request where grounding seems overexplicit due to repetition is this:

- (15) (asking a classmate to lend you a pen in class)

L: [...] *um* (.) *saya* (.) *tidak ada pena* (.) *uh* (.) *saya*
 um I not have pen uh I

L: (.) *lupa pena* (.) *uh boleh saya* (.) *pinjam* (.)
 forget pen uh may I borrow

L: *pena Anda?*
 pen your

'Um, I don't have a pen, uh, I've forgotten a pen. Uh, may I borrow your pen?'

In (15) above, the learner begins by grounding his request in an L2-native-like way, with *Saya tidak ada pena* 'I don't have a pen'. Then he seems to feel the need to ground the request more fully, and after a pause, adds the information *Saya lupa pena* 'I've forgotten a pen'. Either the first or the second segment of the grounder alone would have created an appropriate effect, but the addition of one to the other in this way creates an effect of redundant grounding.

Excessive support sometimes involves use of a grounder in a situation where no Indonesian native subjects use one. An example is (16) below ["P" stands for roleplay partner]:

- (16) (asking a stranger in the park for a light)

L: [...] *boleh-kah Anda* (.) *memberikan saya* (.)
 may-Q you give; TR me

L: *korek api? karena saya lupa korek api*
 match because I forget match

L: *saya di rumah saya*
 my in house my

P: *Mm hm/*
 mm hm

L: *dan saya mau merokok.*
 and I want smoke;TR

'Can you give me a match? Because I forgot my matches back in my house and I want to have a cigarette.'

In the situation in (16) above, it is likely to be obvious to the hearer why the speaker wants a match. Not only is asking for a light for a cigarette a stereotyped request, but the speaker had a cigarette in her hand as she made the request. Therefore the information *Saya mau merokok* 'I want to have a cigarette', in particular, is likely to strike the hearer as redundant, and the effect is non-L2-like.

Here is a final example in (17) of heavy grounding by a learner:

(17) (asking a classmate to let you look on at their book in class)

L: [...] *uh(.) saya(.) saya ke-(.)um-tinggalan (.)*
uh I I left-um-behind

L: *uh(.) buku(.) buku saya uh(.) di rumah saya*
uh book book my uh in house my

P: *Mm hm*
mm hm

L: *dan saya(.) saya(.) uh(1.0) (sighs) saya mau*
and I I uh (sighs) I want

L: *(.)uh(.) membaca (.)uh(.) buku-mu? [um*
uh read;TR uh book-your um

P: ()]

L: *boleh saya (.)boleh saya(.) um(.) membaca*
may I may I um read;TR
buku Ibu?
book your

L: 'Uh, I've left behind, my book, uh, in my house'

P: 'Mm hm.'

L: 'and I, uh, I want to look at, uh, your book. Um, may I, um, look at your book?'

In (17) above, the learner begins by grounding his request in an appropriate way, by saying that he has left his book behind. However, instead of proceeding directly to a request for permission to look at the classmate's book, he first adds an extra piece of grounding information: that he wants to look at the book. This piece of information is implicitly contained in the main request, and so its explicit inclusion creates a non-L2-like effect. It is interesting to note that the speaker in (17) seems to have a lot of difficulty expressing this additional piece of grounding information (evident from repetitions, pauses, and sighs), but that he perseveres with it, as if he considers it to be an important component of the request.

4.1.4 *Frequent and lengthy grounding by the learners on their query preparatory requests: Discussion*

The frequent use of supportive moves by the learners on their query preparatory requests is consistent with most previous studies (see earlier). Second language learners have been argued to prefer external over internal modifiers because the former are more explicit in their politeness function (Faerch & Kasper 1989). External modifiers are longer and derive their politeness value directly from the

propositional content and the illocutionary meaning of the move itself, so learners feel more confident that their intended politeness message is conveyed successfully if they use them instead of internal modifiers (Faerch & Kasper 1989).

Equally important in this study may be simply that the learners are *able* to use external modifiers: that the obstacles to using internal ones do not apply. For one thing, the grounder is the main type of supportive move on requests in native English, too (see e.g. House & Kasper 1987; Faerch & Kasper 1989; Trosborg 1995; Fukushima 1996, Woodfield this volume). In fact, grounders are consistently used across languages as the main type of external modifier by both learners and native speakers, and it may be that giving reasons to justify a request is inherently the "psychologically most plausible" means of supporting a request (House & Kasper 1987: 1281). Therefore these learners can know that their Indonesian requests will be effectively supported by grounders, either from first language knowledge or as part of the "general pragmatic knowledge-base" (Blum-Kulka 1991: 262) that all speakers are equipped with. This lends some support to Bialystok's (1993) proposal that for adult second language learners, the task of acquiring pragmatic knowledge is already largely accomplished.

The factor of processing complexity, too, is a less formidable obstacle in the case of external modifiers. The addition of supportive moves will not generally result in more complex pragmalinguistic structures to be planned. This is because the chunks, or constituents, by which utterances are verbally planned are small: typically a noun or verb phrase or short clause (cf. Clark & Clark 1977: 248, 260). Because supportive moves occur outside the head act, they will tend to be planned in separate constituents to the head act and so will not increase the complexity of the formal operations involved in planning the head act constituents themselves.

Likewise, the point that learners may 'omit' internal modifiers while planning their requests without even knowing it does not apply to supportive moves. While internal modifiers are primarily modality markers which contribute minimal propositional meaning to the request (cf. Kasper 1982), supportive moves such as grounders do carry explicit propositional meaning, which learners are likely to be conscious of and therefore concerned to convey.

As for the strikingly large amounts of information included by these learners in their supportive moves, this is compatible with previous findings. They probably add too much information because they lack confidence in their ability to make their meaning understood (cf. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1986; Faerch & Kasper 1989), or lack confidence in their ability to be adequately polite (Faerch & Kasper 1989), or both. They may also do it to assert their linguistic competence; to show that they are proficient enough to produce lengthy utterances (cf. Faerch & Kasper 1989). Also, their heavy grounding in their Indonesian requests may be partly as a form of compensation. They may feel the need to mitigate the potentially brusque

effect achieved by their lack of internal modifiers by putting extra effort into externally modifying the request instead.

What makes the present finding unusual is that it occurs in oral discourse. L2 learners have not to my knowledge been observed to use excessive support in oral discourse on requests or other speech acts (see earlier). This has led Trosborg (1995:432–433) to question whether ‘playing it safe’ by means of lengthy speech acts is indeed a universal strategy of intermediate language learners, as Faerch and Kasper (1989:245) claim it to be.

Trosborg (1995:301) suggests that learners in the CCSARP used long supportive moves because the written elicitation method forced them to. It obliged them to make the request in a single turn so they had to cram all their information into a single request utterance. On the other hand, House and Kasper (1987:1285) argue that that elicitation method merely allowed those learners to realise their natural need for lengthy supportive moves. I would suggest that the CCSARP elicitation method did encourage learners to use excessive support but in a different way from that proposed by Trosborg (1995) and one which helps to explain why these learners of Indonesian do it too. The written cues for CCSARP items appear to contain a good deal of potential grounding information. Foreign learners, who tend to rely on the language of written cues in formulating responses to tasks (cf. Beebe & Takahashi 1989) and are also likely to have a more anxious, ‘test-taking’ approach to the task than L2 native subjects and so wish to show that they have not overlooked anything, may simply tend to include more of this ‘cue-card’ information in their response.⁴

In the present study, the same effect seems to be at work. The grounders by both learners and Indonesian natives tend to consist of information in the written roleplay cue, and this information may have influenced the learners especially (see Hassall 2001:275–276 for a sample analysis of a request by a learner which

4. A close comparison of one request by a CCSARP learner with the matching written cue in Hassall (2001:275) shows the plausibility of this explanation. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986:176), too, note briefly the tendency of L2 learners in the CCSARP study to include information from written prompts in their responses. The idea that L2 learners are strongly influenced by the content of written prompts in supporting their speech acts gains partial support from a study by Billmyer and Varghese (2000). Those authors find that L2 learners do use content from written prompts in their supportive moves, and show further that they use a greater amount of support when the written prompts contain greater amounts of contextual information. However, as Billmyer and Varghese (2000) also find their L2 *native* subjects to behave in the same ways, it is not demonstrated that L2 learners are more prone to a ‘cue card effect’ than are L2 natives. Otcu and Zeyrek (2008) find that L2 learner and native subjects seem to take their choice of propositional content for supportive moves – including their grounders – from their written prompts.

illustrates this apparent influence). The fact that these Australian learners did not tend to support requests as heavily as learners in the CCSARP may be partly because the present method did not permit such a strong 'cue card effect'. These Australian learners were not allowed to refer to the written cues while performing the roleplays (that is, while producing the requests) and also tended to be given less potential grounding information on their written cues than CCSARP subjects were given in theirs. So while oral roleplay studies such as this are likely to cut down on a cue card effect in producing excessive support on requests, they may not satisfactorily eliminate it. Natural requesting data by learners is needed to determine whether in the absence of any potential supportive information at all in written form, learners exhibit this feature.

4.1.5 *Development with proficiency in amount of grounding on query preparatory requests: Findings and discussion*

A proficiency effect on amount of grounding by these learners on their query preparatory requests can be observed. This takes the form of a U-shaped distribution whereby lowest level learners approximate L2 native behaviour, middle proficiency learners diverge from this behaviour, and learners at a high level, once again, approximate native speakers. From the Low group, two of the three learners never use excessive supportive moves on any requests. They consistently provide the same amount of grounding material as Indonesian native subjects, or on occasions even less. By contrast, the Middle group of learners shows a clear tendency to include excessive or redundant information in grounders. However, at a higher level still, this feature is not found: neither High learner ever uses excessive grounding on a request.

This finding concurs with those of other studies in an important respect. Economidou-Kogetsidis (this volume) finds that low proficiency Greek Cypriot learners of English do not employ a higher number of external modifiers than L2 native speakers, probably due to their limited linguistic knowledge. And Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) found that, while CCSARP learners of Hebrew in their study generally provided excessive support on requests, the lowest level subjects (low-intermediate proficiency) did not – once again presumably due to their lack of linguistic resources.

However, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1986) study also yields an interesting difference from the present findings: even advanced learners in that study were found to provide excessive support on requests. Only those learners of Hebrew who had lived in the target culture for some time (5–7 years) managed to approximate L2 natives in their amount of support on requests; advanced learners who had not lived in the target culture did not appear to become 'cured' of their verbosity simply by virtue of high linguistic proficiency. So the present finding that

the two High Australian learners (upper-intermediate in proficiency) manage to approximate L2 native subjects in their amount of support on requests is perhaps surprising.

A partial explanation may be that the present study, as suggested earlier, does not elicit lengthy support on requests as readily as the CCSARP study. Therefore, perhaps only those Australian learners most prone to that feature will exhibit it, and this is likely to be the mid-intermediate Middle group, who will be less confident than High learners in their ability to express meaning clearly, and more anxious to mark themselves as distinct from beginning learners. In written DCT tasks, on the other hand, very strong and confident intuitions about L2 requesting norms – derivable only from a long stay in the target culture – may be needed to resist the cue card effect.

Another proficiency-related aspect of the present data is worthy of mention. One of the three Low learners (Low-3) shows strikingly different behaviour to the other two Low learners with respect to length of supportive moves. He is perhaps the worst 'offender' of all learners in the study, frequently using remarkably heavy grounding.

This difference between the other two Low learners, and Low-3, seems to correlate with a clear difference in interactional style. Low-1 and Low-2 are noticeably nervous and withdrawn during the roleplays compared with other subjects, and seem highly conscious of their linguistic shortcomings; they speak very softly, rarely initiate sequences, give brief or sometimes no responses to initiating moves by partners, rarely smile or laugh, and generally seem ill-at-ease during interaction. They seem to opt for minimal involvement in order to minimise opportunities for interactional difficulties to arise. However, Low-3 gives a very different impression. Even though he has equally low linguistic ability, it does not seem to disconcert him. He speaks very loudly, often initiates sequences, responds at length to initiating moves by the partner, smiles and laughs a lot, and despite his very real communicative difficulties, generally gives an impression of being confident, relaxed and of enjoying himself.

Thus, it appears that due to his unusually high confidence and willingness to take risks in interaction, the subject Low-3 is embarking 'early' on verbose request-supportive behaviour; that is, at a stage of linguistic proficiency when learners typically do not exhibit this feature. This seems analogous to the 'multi-dimensional' aspect of the model proposed for acquisition of grammar by learners (cf. Meisal et al. 1981), in which although all learners move through the same sequence of ordered developmental stages, individual social-psychological factors of this kind are crucial in determining *how* learners move through the stages, for example how soon they enter a certain stage and how long they remain at it.

4.1.6 Summary: Modification of query preparatory requests

Learners use far fewer internal modifiers than L2 native subjects and do not use the most common Indonesian native types of internal modifiers at all. The main cause appears to simply be their lack of knowledge of those modifiers. As for supportive moves, the learners use a similar number to the Indonesians and favour the same type (the grounder). They often produce strikingly long grounders, perhaps partly as an artefact of the elicitation method.

4.2 Modification of imperative requests

These learners' modification of this less commonly chosen request strategy reveals an important aspect of their behaviour not evident from the above. While their *external* modification of imperatives is unremarkable, with both they and the native Indonesian subjects favouring grounders, their internal modification of imperatives merits a more detailed look.⁵ It should be borne in mind that comparisons between the two groups with respect to this sub-strategy are of limited validity, as only a small number of imperatives are used (particularly by learners) and to some extent they are used in different situations by the two groups.

4.2.1 Internal modification of imperatives: Findings

Both Indonesian native subjects and Australian learners modify nearly all their imperative requests internally (see Table 5). However, the two groups make a very different choice of modifier.

Table 5. Proportion of subjects' imperative requests which are internally modified

	Learners (total requests = 10)		Indon. native speakers (total requests = 19)	
	n	%	n	%
imperatives with one internal modifier	7	70	6	31.6
imperatives with > 1 internal modifier	2	20	11	57.9
Total imperatives with internal modification	9	90	17	89.5

5. On imperative requests, these Australian learners' grounders were less obviously lengthy than on their query preparatory requests. This is not surprising, as using a highly direct request strategy such as imperative and using only a moderate amount of grounding both suggest the same intent: an intent to invest relatively little effort to save hearer's face.

Nearly 90% (or 17/19) of the native Indonesians' imperative requests are internally modified (see Table 5). By far their most frequent modifier is the politeness marker *tolong*. This literally means 'help', but when used to modify requests can be translated as 'please' (cf. Sneddon et al. 2010: 337). Native Indonesian subjects use *tolong* on a large majority (83.3% or 16/19) of their imperative requests (see Table 6). Examples are (18) and (19):

(18) (asking for a cinema ticket in the middle front row)

N: [...] *tolong cari yang ini Mas* (.)
please look.for REL this brother

N: *bagian tengah depan*
section middle front

'Please have a look for this, brother: the middle front section.'

(19) (asking a taxi driver to stop for a minute)

N: [...] *tolong berhenti sebentar* (.) *saya ada*
please stop;INT a.short.time I have

N: *perlu untuk beli rokok*
need for buy cigarette

'Please stop for a minute. I need to buy cigarettes.'

Use of this modifier *tolong* in examples like those above softens the force of the imperative request considerably. It tends to convey the impression that the speaker is asking a favour of the hearer.

Table 6. Proportion of subjects' imperative requests which contain each type of internal modifier

Type of internal modifier	Learners (total requests = 10)		Indon. native speakers (total requests = 19)	
	n	%	n	%
-lah "please" (?)	7	70	–	–
<i>tolong</i> "please"	2	20	16	84.2
<i>ya</i> "yes"	2	20	8	42.1
kin term of address e.g. <i>Pak</i> "father"	–	–	6	31.6
Other	–	–	4	21.1

Another modifier frequently used on imperatives by native Indonesian subjects is the appealer *ya* 'yes'. Almost half (42.1% or 8/19) of imperatives by the

Indonesian subjects are modified with this *ya* element (see Table 6). An example is (20) below:

- (20) (ordering a drink in a restaurant)
 N: [...] *tolong bawain se-botol bir ya?*
 please bring;BEN one-bottle beer yes?
 'Please bring me a bottle of beer, yes?'

This element *ya* 'yes' has a distinct softening effect on imperatives. As Sneddon et al. observe, it helps the speaker to avoid the appearance of a firm order by "drawing the listener into agreement" (2010:337).

The other internal modifier used quite frequently by Indonesian subjects on imperatives is a kin term such as *Pak*, *Bu*, *Mas* or *Mbak* (see earlier). This modifier is used in almost one third (31.6% or 6/19) of instances (see Table 6). Most imperative requests (57.9% or 11/19) by Indonesian subjects contain *more* than one type of internal modifier (see Table 5). This sometimes produces the effect of highly routinised modification. For example, of the five imperatives used by Indonesians in asking a bus conductor to tell them when they get to their stop, all five have the same essential modification pattern of 'politeness marker + appealer', illustrated in (21) and (22) below.

- (21) N: *Tolong nanti dikasih tahu ya ...?*
 help later tell;PASS yes ...?
 'Please tell me, yes, ... ?'
- (22) N: *Tolong Mas nanti dikasih tahu ya ?*
 please brother later tell;PASS yes. ?
 'Please, brother, tell me, yes, ... ?'

Modification of imperatives by native Indonesian subjects can be highly compounded. A particularly elaborate example is below:

- (23) (asking a taxi driver to stop for a minute so you can buy cigarettes)
 N: [...] *coba tolong berhenti sebentar Pak ya?*
 please please stop;INT a.short.time 'father' yes
 'Please, please stop for a minute father, yes?'

In (23) the speaker uses two different politeness markers, as well as a respectful term of address, and an appealer; the combined effect of which is to greatly soften the effect of the command. To sum up, imperative requests by these Indonesians are nearly always mitigated by internal modifiers, and often these elements are used in combination, with a particularly powerful mitigating effect.

The learners, too, internally modify nearly all their imperative requests. They use such a modifier on 90% (or 9/10) of imperatives (see Table 5). However,

learners do not use the same modifiers as Indonesian subjects. Most importantly, learners' most commonly used modifier is one which these Indonesians never use: an imperative marker *-lah*. This modifier is used on a majority (70% or 7/10) of imperatives by learners (see Table 6). Examples are these:

- (24) (asking a hotel servant to have your clothes washed)

L: [...] *cuci-lah pakaian kotor saya*.
 wash-*lah* clothing dirty my
 'Wash-*lah* my dirty clothes.'

- (25) (asking a taxi driver to stop for a minute so you can buy cigarettes)

L: [...] *berhenti-lah sebentar ...*
 stop;INT-*lah* a.short.time
 'Stop-*lah* for a minute.'

This enclitic *-lah*, as Sneddon et al. observe, "rarely occurs in imperative constructions in everyday speech" (2010:336). Learners can be assumed to use it for its intended politeness value; they are taught (Johns 1977:23) that it equates with 'please' on imperative requests and that it makes such requests less abrupt. However, it is actually of doubtful effectiveness in softening requests such as (24) and (25) above. In the first place, there is considerable disagreement in the literature over whether this feature conveys politeness on imperatives at all, or simply marks imperative mood.⁶ Moreover, even if this feature *does* affect the politeness of an imperative, it may not always be in the way learners intend: Mintz (1994) claims that the pragmatic effect of *-lah* is highly context-sensitive, and that while it may sometimes "take the edge off" an imperative, it may sometimes aggravate the force instead, by conveying an emphatic, "somewhat condemnatory" tone (Mintz 1994:237). On the whole, judging from the response of Indonesian native speaker informants to learner imperative requests such as (24) and (25) above (e.g. 'When I hear someone say something like that I know straight away it's a foreigner', and 'It just sounds funny'), it seems safe to say that this modifier does not successfully convey the pragmatic force that learners intended.

Apart from this main modifier *-lah*, learners also sometimes use one of the two main Indonesian native choices of modifier: *tolong* 'please' (in 20% or 2/10 of imperatives), or the applier *ya* 'yes' (in 30% or 3/10 of imperatives). However,

6. Sneddon et al. (2010:336) claim that *-lah* probably does not function as a softener of imperatives for most Indonesians. Verhaar (1984:53), similarly, appears to regard it as a purely grammatical marker. However, other writers (e.g. Sarumpaet (1977:145), Johns (1977:23); D.P. & K (1993:248) claim that *-lah* functions to soften a command. Soebardi (1989) seems ambivalent on this question, claiming that *-lah* can indeed make imperatives more polite, but also suggesting that it is used to mark imperative mood (Soebardi 1989:33, 37, 42).

unlike these Indonesians, learners only occasionally use compound internal modification on an imperative (on two occasions, or 2/10 of their imperative requests: see Table 5). And when they do so, this compound contains the rather problematic element *-lah* as one of the two modifiers, so the effect is not one of highly modified requestive force, as probably intended. One example is below:

- (26) (asking a taxi driver to stop for a minute so you can buy cigarettes)
 L: *Tolong henti-lah* [...]
 please stop-lah
 'Please stop-lah ...'

In (26) above any mitigation of the forcefulness of the imperative can be said to be due to the L2-native-like modifier *tolong* 'please' alone, rather than to the combination of modifiers. On the whole, then, while learners consistently modify their imperative requests internally, they rarely select an effective modifier, and rarely use more than one modifier.

To sum up, we see a clear difference from the 'Query Preparatory' findings earlier. Not only the L2 native subjects but also the learners use internal modification on almost all their imperative requests. However, the two groups achieve quite different effects through use of internal modifiers. Indonesian native speakers primarily use a politeness marker with a strong mitigating effect (*tolong* 'please') and frequently combine it with other effective modifiers as well, sometimes achieving a routinised effect of quite elaborate modification. Learners, on the other hand, tend to use a modifier of dubious effectiveness (the enclitic *-lah*). While they sometimes use a more effective modifier instead, or as well, they produce no compound modification of comparable effect to that of Indonesians.

4.2.2 *Frequent use of internal modifier -lah by learners on imperatives: Discussion*

The regular use of this internal modifier by learners is largely explicable by the influence of instruction. In the learners' main textbook, imperative constructions with the modifier *-lah* are presented and practised extensively in drills, at various stages of the course (Johns 1977: Chapters 2, 3, 8, and 12). Given the restricted currency that this marker *-lah* on imperatives has in Indonesian native speech (cf. Sneddon et al. 2010), it seems clear that many of the imperatives with *-lah* that learners are presented with and required to produce in the classroom constitute non-L2-like use of language. Therefore learners' use of this marker *-lah* illustrates 'primary teaching induction' from this deviant input (see Kasper 1982).

L1 transfer may also play a contributory role in the consistent selection of *-lah* on imperatives by these learners. They can be expected to equate *-lah* with English 'please', as it is consistently translated as 'please' in their main textbook

(Johns 1977). And native English speakers appear to use 'please' frequently on imperatives, in particular (House 1989:105; Aijmer 1996:166). Therefore, these learners may perceive imperatives in the L2 as a highly appropriate environment for a marker which equates to 'please' partly due to L1 influence.

As for why the learners prefer this *-lah* modifier to *tolong* 'please', the Indonesian native subjects' choice of imperative downgrader; one factor is probably amount of formal instruction. While the feature *tolong*, too, is presented and practised in the learners' main textbook (Johns 1977), the learners receive approximately four times as much exposure to and practice of *-lah* on imperatives as they do of *tolong* – which is only presented and practised in one chapter (in Chapter 12). The marker *-lah* on imperatives is also taught to them much earlier than the use of *tolong*: they start to practise using 'lah' from when they are still near-beginners (in Chapter (2), and only some months later is *tolong* introduced as an alternative marker (in Chapter 14). As Kasper (1982) observes, this kind of grading of two features can allow the early-taught feature to become "a stable and well-automatized element of the learners' IL system" before the later feature is introduced, making it harder for learners to learn to use the second one instead (1982:104).

The psycholinguistic factor of processing complexity, as well, probably helps to account for learners' preference for *-lah* over *tolong*. Clahsen (1984:222) argues that the separation of a particle from the verb requires processing effort because it entails producing a surface structure which cannot be mapped directly onto the deep structure. Thus, the enclitic *-lah* (as in *Bawakanlah...* 'Bring-lah...') should be easier to add to an imperative than the free element *tolong* (as in *Tolong bawakan...* 'Please bring...'). Use of the particle *-lah* is also likely to require less "psycholinguistic preplanning capacity" (cf. Faerch & Kasper 1989:233–34) than the use of *tolong*. The particle *-lah* can be added to an imperative verb as an 'afterthought', while the element *tolong*, which must precede the verb, has to be incorporated into earlier stages of verbal planning.⁷

The regular use by these learners of the modifier *-lah* on imperatives gives an insight into their *non*-use of internal modifiers on their query preparatory modal requests (and on their direct questions: see below). The intensive instruction learners receive in this imperative modifier *-lah* is in striking contrast to the virtual

7. Learners may also be discouraged from *using* *tolong* 'please' by a perceived grammatical restriction on its use. The learners' main textbook (Johns 1977:235) clearly implies that *tolong* may be used only with *transitive* verbs (a restriction disregarded by Indonesian native speaker subjects in this study). While half of the imperatives (5/10) used by learners in this study are transitive verbs, where *tolong* could be used, learners are likely to find it simpler not to use *tolong* on imperatives at all, rather than having to worry about whether they are using it on the right kind of verb.

absence of instruction in internal modifiers for other request types. This supports the notion that they may have been prevented from adding internal modifiers to other request types by their lack of knowledge of the relevant modifiers.

4.2.3 *Summary: Modification of imperative requests*

The learners, too, use internal modifiers on their imperatives. However, they strongly favour one modifier of doubtful effectiveness, which L2 natives never use (the enclitic *-lah*). They seem to favour it because of their extensive formal instruction in it and because of its structural simplicity.

4.3 Modification of direct questions

Five of the roleplay situations were 'Asking' situations, or situations in which the goal of the request was information (see the situations in data samples 28–35). In all these situations the direct question was easily the most favoured strategy of learners and native Indonesians alike, so modification of direct questions can validly be examined in all these situations.

4.3.1 *Internal Modification of direct questions: Findings*

Indonesian native subjects strongly tended to modify their direct questions internally whereas the Australian learners almost never did so. Indonesian subjects modified them internally in a large majority of instances (72.7% or 24/33: see Table 7).

Table 7. Proportion of subjects' direct questions which are internally modified

	Learners (total direct questions = 34)		Indon. native speakers (total direct questions = 33)	
	n	%	n	%
direct questions with one internal modifier	1	2.9	13	39.4
direct questions with > 1 internal modifier*	–	–	11	33.3
Total direct questions with internal modification	1	2.9	24	72.7

* This category refers to more than one *type* of internal modifier. So instances where only the Appearer *ya* is used, but it is used twice, are not included in this category.

By far the most common modifier by Indonesian subjects was the appearer *ya* 'yes'. They used it on most of their questions (63.6% or 21/33: see Table 8). An example is this:

- (27) (asking a stranger on the railway platform if the train that has just arrived is the one to Bandung)

N: [...] *ini (.) kereta api yang baru saja*
 this train REL only.now just

N: *datang ini apa-kah kereta yang ke Bandung ya?*
 come this Q-Q train REL to Bandung yes

'This train that just came in is it the one to Bandung, yes?'

This modifier *ya* 'yes' on direct questions as in (27) above has a similar effect to when it is used in requests proper: it appeals to the cooperation of the hearer and so makes the question seem less coercive.

Table 8. Proportion of subjects' direct questions which contain each type of internal modifier

Type of internal modifier	Learners (total direct questions = 34)		Indon. native speakers (total direct questions = 33)	
	n	%	n	%
Appealer (<i>ya</i> 'yes')	1	2.9	21	63.6
kin term of address (e.g. <i>Pak</i> 'father')	—	—	11	33.3
Hedge	—	—	3	9.1

Kin terms are also used by Indonesian subjects as internal modifiers in a large proportion of direct questions (33.3% or 11/33; see Table 8). The addition of these relationship-markers to direct questions, as to other requests, adds an element of politeness to the head act.

Hedges on the force of the question are occasionally used by Indonesian subjects to soften the effect (in 9.1% or 3/33 of instances; see Table 8). An example is below:

- (28) (asking a police officer at the station where to report a lost passport)

N: [...] *kira-kira di mana ya saya bisa*
 do.you.think LOC where yes I can

ngelaporkan-nya.

report;TR-it

'Where do you think I can report it?'

In (28) the element *kira-kira*, meaning 'do you think' conveys the impression that the hearer is not necessarily expected to know the information asked for. This hedge on interrogative force makes the question seem less demanding.

A large proportion (33.3% or 11/33) of direct questions by Indonesian subjects have *compound* internal modification (see Table 7). Generally this consists of the appealer combined with a kin term. This combination of an appeal to the hearer's cooperation and overt marking of a relationship with the hearer creates an effect of considerable effort to make the question acceptable to the hearer. This is particularly so when the appealer is used repeatedly as in examples (29) and (30) below:

- (29) (asking a coach conductor during a long journey how long until the coach arrives)
 N: *Masih lama ya sampai Denpasar ya Mas ya*
 still long.time yes until Denpasar yes brother yes
 'Is it still long, yes, to Denpasar, yes brother, yes?'
- (30) (asking stranger in street for directions to Language Centre)
 N: [...] *uh(.) ke(.) kalau mau ke Pusat Bahasa itu(.)*
 uh to if want to centre language that
lewat jalan mana ya Mbak ya
 through street which yes sister yes
 'Uh, to get to the Language Centre, which way is it, yes, sister, yes?'

Learners demonstrate strikingly different behaviour from Indonesian subjects with respect to direct questions. They almost never use internal modifiers at all. Only one direct question by a learner (1/34 or 2.9%) contains internal modification (the appealer *ya* 'yes'). So direct questions by learners almost never obtain the mitigated effect that questions by Indonesian native speakers do. Examples of typical learner direct questions are these:

- (31) (asking a stranger in the street for directions to the Language Centre)
 L: [...] *di mana Pusat Bahasa?*
 LOC where centre language
 'Where's the Language Centre?'
- (32) (asking the conductor during a long coach journey how long until the coach arrives)
 L: [...] *berapa lama(.) sebelum(.) bus*
 how.much long.time before bus
 L: *ini(.) tiba di Denpasar?*
 this arrive LOC Denpasar
 'How long before this bus arrives in Denpasar?'

These questions above convey the impression that no particular effort is being made by the speaker through linguistic choices to make the question acceptable to the hearer.

4.3.2 External modification of direct questions: Findings

When Indonesian native subjects use a direct question they tend to modify it with a supportive move (in 60.6% or 20/33 of instances: see Table 9). Learners too use supportive moves fairly often, but strikingly favour a different type.

Table 9. Proportion of subjects' direct questions which are externally modified

	Learners (total direct questions = 34)		Indon. native speakers (total direct questions = 33)	
	n	%	n	%
with 1 external modifier	11	32.4	19	57.6
with > 1 external modifier	–	–	1	3.0
Total No of direct questions which are externally modified	11	32.4	20	60.6
Total No of direct questions	34		33	

The vast majority of the Indonesian subjects' supportive moves are prefaces. They use prefaces on more than half of their direct questions in these situations (see Table 10). Their prefaces to direct questions are of a distinct type, almost all (14/17) of them containing the key element *tanya* or *nanya* 'ask'. Examples are (33) to (35) below:

- (33) (asking a stranger in the street for directions to the Language Centre)

N: *Numpang tanya Mas? (.)* [*uh*
ask.permission ask brother uh

P: *Ya*
yes

N: *Kalau mau ke Pusat Bahasa (.) itu*
if want to centre language that

N: *di mana ya Mas ya.*
LOC where yes brother yes

'May I ask something, brother? If you want to get to the Language Centre, where is it, yes?'

- (34) (asking a stranger in the street for directions to the post office)

N: *Bisa nanya ini Bu?*
can ask this mother

P: *Mm* [*mm*
mm mm

N: *uh] kantor pos utama itu di*
uh office post main that LOC

N: *mana ya?*
where yes

'Can I ask you this, mother, uh, where's the main post office, yes?'

(35) (asking a police officer at the station where to report a lost passport)

N: [...] *saya mau tanya (.)uh (.) di mana*
I want ask uh LOC where

N: *tempat untuk melapor ()/(.) paspor saya hilang?*
place for report;TR passport my lost

'I'd like to ask: where's the place to report that my passport's lost?'

All these prefacing moves above, whether requests for permission to ask a question or, as in (35) above, a statement that the speaker wishes to ask a question, function to convey tentativeness about imposing on the hearer, and hence make the question less coercive.

Table 10. Proportion of subjects' direct questions which contain each type of external modifier

Type of external modifier	Learners (total direct questions = 34)		Indon. native speakers (total direct questions = 33)	
	n	%	n	%
Grounder	9	26.5	3	9.1
Preface	1	2.9	17	51.5
Precommitment	1	2.9	–	–
Disarmer	–	–	1	3.0

Apart from prefaces, native Indonesian subjects do not use any kind of supportive move frequently on direct questions. They occasionally use grounders (9.1% or 3/33 of instances), and once use a disarmer (see Table 10). So, as might be expected, they rarely use compound external modification.

The learners use external modifiers on around a third (32.4% or 11/34) of their direct questions (see Table 9). In contrast to the Indonesian native subjects they practically never use prefaces – using grounders instead (see Table 10).

4.3.3 Lack of prefaces on direct questions by the learners: Discussion

One important reason for the lack of prefaces by learners is that transfer of English pragmatic knowledge about this type of move is likely to make a speaker eschew a preface in these situations in Indonesian. The English pragmalinguistic

equivalents to the customary Indonesian prefaces with *tanya/nanya* 'ask'; such as 'Could I ask a question?', or 'Can I ask you something?', have very restricted currency in English as prefaces to requests for information. Schegloff calls them 'pre-delicates' in such cases, because they are used mainly when the information requested is potentially sensitive, such as personal information from a stranger (Schegloff 1980:132); or when asking a question constitutes a violation of conversational expectations because normal turn-taking rules have been suspended, such as the case of a question from an audience member during a lecture (Schegloff 1980:144-145). Sifianou (1992:183), similarly, observes that these questions are not commonly used to precede requests for information in English. Therefore, learners are likely to need L2-specific pragmatic knowledge to be able to include prefaces on their direct questions in Indonesian in these routine Asking situations.

A complementary factor is the lack of requisite L2 pragmatic information in the learners' teaching materials. In the learners' main textbook (Johns 1977), they are presented with a number of formal permutations on an appropriate preface formula, below:

Apa boleh saya bertanya?
 Apa-kah boleh saya bertanya?
 Boleh-kah saya bertanya?
 Boleh saya bertanya? (Johns 1977:36)

Q may I ask (a question)?
 Q-Q may I ask (a question)?
 May-Q I ask (a question)?
 May I ask (a question)?

However, the learners are informed only that "[T]he above examples are all questions, meaning 'May I ask a question?'" (Johns 1977:36). They are not told that it may be desirable for reasons of politeness to use these forms to preface another question, and they are given no practice in using them to do so. In fact, the practice activities provided are likely to obscure any possible Prefacing function; for example, a drill involving substitution of pronouns: *Apakah boleh mereka bertanya?* → *Apakah boleh Tom bertanya?*... 'May they ask a question?' → 'May Tom ask a question?'... (Johns 1977:37).

One of the above questions is used as a Preface in a dialogue in the learners' main textbook on two occasions (Johns 1977:31, 96). However, those are the only instances of contextualised use of these forms, and it would not be surprising if this minimal pragmatic information were insufficient to enable learners to infer that these forms (or very similar ones) are commonly used with prefacing function in Indonesian discourse.

4.3.4 *Comparing modification of different request types*

The results of this study highlight the usefulness of examining modifiers according to strategy. When it comes to their main strategy, the query preparatory request, these learners of Indonesian behave in fairly typical L2 learner fashion. They favour the same type of supportive move as target language native speakers (i.e. the grounder), and use it abundantly, but use few internal modifiers. However, when making imperative requests these learners of Indonesian behave differently. With that request type they frequently do use internal modifiers. That is a distinctly unusual finding for L2 learners in oral interaction. As we saw, certain factors help explain it: the learners had been intensively drilled in one internal modifier of imperatives (*-lah*) and that modifier was psycholinguistically easy to insert.

Looking separately at the strategy of direct questions yields another unusual finding. Usually L2 learners and native speakers of a target language favour the same type of supportive move (i.e. grounders), and differ only in how heavily they use it. But these Australian learners differ crucially from native speakers in their type of supportive move. The Indonesian natives favour the preface when asking direct questions, but this type of move is strikingly lacking from these Australian learners' own questions, because they cannot rely on L1 or universal knowledge to access it.

Thus, examining modification according to strategy type as recommended by Faerch & Kasper (1989) can reveal patterns of use which would otherwise remain hidden. That helps provide a more complex and subtle picture of how L2 learners modify their requests.

5. Conclusion

Requests made by these L2 learners using their main request type (i.e. query preparatory) have two key features: lack of internal modifiers and frequent supportive moves. These two features will tend to typify L2 speech acts for a number of reasons. One reason is that many internal modifiers demand higher processing capacity to produce than do supportive moves, and so as the more complex structures they are acquired later. However, these learners of Indonesian are also barred from using the main L2 internal modifiers – on all of query preparatory requests, imperatives and direct questions – simply by their lack of knowledge of them.

This study helps put into perspective the claim of Bialystok (1993) that for adult second language learners the task of acquiring pragmatic knowledge is already largely accomplished. Importantly, the grounding move was available to these learners by virtue of their first language or universal pragmatic knowledge. However, their lack of knowledge of the most common internal modifiers of all

three request types, and of the main type of supportive move for direct questions (the preface), shows that acquiring new pragmatic knowledge is also a major task for adult learners.

The study confirms findings that L2 learners often produce very long supportive moves, and demonstrates that this feature may be displayed in oral discourse as well as written responses. At the same time, it suggests that the feature may be partly an artifact of the elicitation method so that natural data are needed to confirm the finding. This feature of lengthy support followed a U-shaped curve of development in the present case, with the mid-proficiency subjects producing most of the lengthy grounders. However, one Low learner also used abundant grounding – one who displayed a strikingly different demeanour to the other Low learners. That suggests L2 learners are affected by individual social-psychological factors in *how* they move through a sequence of developmental stages in L2 pragmatics – analogous to the claims of a well-known model for acquisition of L2 grammar.

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Appendix 1

Roleplay cues for the situations used to examine modification of query preparatory requests.

1. You are in a cassette store, and you would like to listen to a cassette that you see (for example the latest Iwan Fals cassette). Approach the assistant at the counter.
[Anda berada di toko kaset, dan Anda ingin mencoba sebuah kaset yang Anda lihat (misalnya, kaset Iwan Fals yang terbaru). Dekatilah pelayan yang sedang berdiri di belakang meja pajangan.]
2. You are a student at university, sitting in class. You were away sick last week, so you didn't get a handout that was distributed. The lecturer is approaching you now – this is a good chance to talk to them.
[Anda adalah seorang mahasiswa di sebuah universitas, sedang duduk di ruangan kelas. Anda tidak hadir minggu yang lalu karena sakit, sehingga tidak diberi latihan. Sekarang dosen mendekati Anda – inilah kesempatan baik untuk berbicara dengan dia.]
3. You are walking in a park. You feel like a cigarette, but you do not have any matches. There is someone sitting smoking on a bench nearby. Approach them.
[Anda sedang berjalan-jalan di kebun raya. Anda ingin merokok, tetapi tidak mempunyai korek api. Ada seseorang yang duduk di bangku dekat Anda sementara merokok. Dekatilah dia.]
4. You are sitting in class. You realise that you have left your textbook at home. The student sitting next to you has their textbook open in front of them and is following the lesson.
[Anda sedang duduk di kelas. Anda baru menyadari bahwa buku pelajaran Anda tertinggal di rumah. Mahasiswa yang duduk di samping Anda sudah ada buku pelajaran terbuka di depannya, dan dia sedang mengikuti pelajaran.]
5. You are a passenger in a taxi, on a long journey across the city. You would like the taxi to stop for a minute so you can buy some cigarettes.
[Anda sedang naik taksi melintasi kota (sebuah perjalanan yang panjang). Anda ingin taksi berhenti sebentar sehingga Anda dapat membeli rokok.]
6. You are about to walk home from the shops when you see a friend getting on their motorbike. They live in the same residential college (*asrama*) as you, and you could get a lift with them. Call out to them to attract their attention.
[Anda baru saja mau pulang dari pertokoan dengan berjalan kaki, ketika Anda melihat seorang teman yang mulai menaiki sepeda motornya. Dia juga tinggal di asrama dengan Anda, sehingga mungkin Anda bisa ikut pulang dengan dia. Panggilah dia.]
7. You bought a shirt yesterday. Now you have brought it back to exchange it for one of a different colour (you haven't unwrapped it). Approach the manager of the store.

[Anda membeli sebuah kemeja kemarin. Sekarang Anda membawa kemeja itu kembali ke toko pakaian untuk menukarkannya dengan kemeja yang berwarna lain. (Kemeja itu masih dibungkus). Dekatilah manajernya.]

8. You are sitting in a lecture theatre at university. The lecture is about to start. You realise you do not have a pen. A student who you know is sitting near you.

[Anda sedang duduk di ruangan kuliah. Kuliah baru saja mau mulai. Tiba-tiba Anda sadar bahwa Anda tidak mempunyai pulpen. Seorang mahasiswa yang sudah Anda kenal sedang duduk di dekat Anda.]

9. You enter a roadside eating stall (*warung*). The benches are almost full, but if someone moves a little there will be room for you. Approach someone.

[Anda masuk ke sebuah warung. Walaupun semua bangku sudah hampir penuh, tetapi jika orang yang duduk bergeser sedikit, maka masih ada sedikit tempat. Dekatilah seseorang.]

10. You are a student at university, and you have an essay for your Javanese culture course due on Friday. You don't think you can finish it before next Monday. You go to see your lecturer and knock on their door.

[Anda adalah mahasiswa di sebuah universitas. Anda harus menyerahkan sebuah esai untuk matakuliah "Kebudayaan Jawa" pada hari Jumat, tetapi rasanya tidak mampu menyelesaikannya sebelum hari Senin minggu depan. Anda pergi ke kantor dosen dan mengetok pintunya.]

11. You are in a shoe shop and see a pair of shoes that you like. You want to try on a pair. Approach a sales assistant.

[Anda berada di toko sepatu. Anda melihat sepatu yang Anda sukai, dan Anda ingin mencoba sepasang. Dekatilah pelayan toko.]

