

# Oral Requests in Advanced Level English Coursebooks and English Movies: An Evaluative Study

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## Abstract

Concerns over the phony nature of textbooks and artificiality of their contents in reflecting authentic language have been raised by a number of researchers. It has been argued that many language teaching programs result in the failure of learners of English to successfully communicate in the target language. The problem with these programs is that there is no general agreement about the success of these materials in developing the pragmatic competence necessary for interlocutors' mutually intelligible communication. Hence, this study explored communicated requests for nonverbal/verbal goods and services (RNGS/RVGS) in the dialogues of 5 textbooks and 8 English movies. The utterances of the textbooks and movies were evaluated on six criteria deriving from research on speech act theory, politeness, and conversation analysis. These included whether the textbooks discussed second pair parts, the forms of requests, the context of request occurrence, the nature of the devices through which the requests are mitigated, and multi-turn request forms. The results of the analysis revealed that, except for re-requests and dispreferred responses of RNGS, textbooks' strategies including forms, face, contexts of RVGS, and strategies of RNGS were not realized through adequate examples compared to their variants in movies. Most importantly, except for bald on record, internal mitigators of RVGS, external mitigators, and direct and indirect forms of RNGS, the other request strategies in the textbooks showed less variety than those of their counterparts in the movies. Internally mitigated RVGS were the only strategies variously exploited in the textbooks. The findings revealed that textbook designers should improve their instructional materials by incorporating more accurate samples of communicated requests in their future textbooks.

**Keywords:** Request, Nonverbal/Verbal Goods and Services, Speech Act Theory, Politeness, Conversation Analysis

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## **1. Introduction**

With the emergence of English as an international language, development of learners' intercultural norms and rules of pragmatic appropriateness has become an essential aspect of many English Language Teaching (ELT) programs to achieve effective communication among interlocutors (Petraiki & Bayes, 2013; Rose & Kasper, 2001). Recent research in the discourse analysis (DA) literature underlines the importance of teaching learners how to formulate speech acts including request acts to achieve successful and real life communication (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Nguyen, 2011).

One medium through which request strategies may be actualized is through the content of English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) textbooks written by native authors. In fact, despite the development of technology and the advent of instructional technology for language learning and teaching, textbooks are still considered as a key component of many instructional materials. The importance of textbooks becomes even greater in an EFL context like Iran because opportunities do not usually arise for communication beyond the classroom. Accordingly, there is an urgent need for textbooks to be appropriately designed in order to provide learners with adequate examples of authentic requests. That is why it is also essential to evaluate textbooks in terms of their sufficient coverage of the intended request materials (Sheldon, 1988).

In fact, requests can be made for two purposes. Speakers can either request for an object, an action or a service, or they request for information (Trosborg, 1995) in a "transactional context in which the request does not need to be softened" (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 2), whereas interactional context mainly involves language chosen to "shape and maintain social relations and identities" in which the request is usually mitigated due to a possible degree of imposition on the requestee (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 2).

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As a basis for evaluation of RNGS/RVGS strategies used in ELT textbooks is analysis of the same strategies utilized in native English movies. Despite the fact that English movies represent a surreal mix of fact and fantasy, the dialogues in these movies cover a wide range of topics with rather complete conversational structures; therefore, they can be considered as representatives of close-to-real-life language. In this respect, a variety of studies have revealed that in contrast to the richly contextualized occurrence of request acts in the movies examined, their presentation in textbooks has appeared highly unrealistic, exaggerated, and inappropriate (Fernández-Guerra & Martínez-Flor, 2003; Martínez-Flor & Fernández-Guerra, 2002). In fact, concerns over the phony nature of textbooks and artificiality of their contents in reflecting authentic language have been raised by a number of researchers (Badiozzaman, 2010; Grant & Starks, 2001; Vellenga, 2004; Wong, 2002). The problem with these instructional materials is that they only focus on developing learners' linguistic competence and pay scant attention to the pragmatic competence necessary for interlocutors' intercultural communication (Delen & Tavil, 2010; Fernandez Amaya, 2008; Tomlinson, 2008).

In a study by Petraki and Bayes (2013), the requestive speech acts utilized in five EFL textbooks were compared with the ones used in an authentic context. The first criticism of their study was that although the frequency of the requestive speech acts was calculated in EFL textbooks, no quantification of the data was provided for the variable in natural/close-to-natural contexts and qualitative analysis of requests in authentic/close-to-authentic contexts was based on previous research findings in authentic discourse. To offset the balance, the current study, however, aims to compare the dialogues of ELT textbooks compiled by native authors with the close-to-reallanguage used in native English movies. The second criticism against Petraki and Bayes's (2013)

study was that intermediate-level textbooks were only considered. Generally, coursebooks designers tend to accommodate difficulty levels of textbooks to proficiency levels of language learners; hence, natural language represented in textbooks would be simplified to be accommodated to the proficiency levels of learners. In the current study, the advanced level textbooks are analyzed assuming that less simplification is involved in the textbooks designed for advanced learners.

The main shortcoming with a few other studies focusing on requests in textbooks/movies is that request realization has been explored from one point of view, that is, the traditional view. Previous studies have only focused on determining the frequency of request sat the cost of overlooking functional realizations of these acts in instructional materials (Fernández-Guerra & Martínez-Flor, 2003; Martínez-Flor, 2008; Salazar Campillo, 2008; Usó-Juan, 2008). However, informed by this negligence, the current study takes into account the frequency and the functions of requests from three standpoints, namely, speech act theory (SAT), politeness theory, and conversation analysis (CA). In fact, one benefit of this triangulation being at the center of our research is that it provides a broader and deeper analysis of the findings (Banik, 1993).

The motivation for the selection of requests derives from the fact that this particular speech act is likely to arise very often in interactional exchanges, and it is one of the most challenging units of pragmatics for the language learners as it requires a great deal of pragmatic knowledge in performing it appropriately; therefore, learners need to make appropriate requests to avoid misunderstandings in their future interactions (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006a). Thus, the purpose of this research is to determine whether native authored EFL textbooks present real life conversations and provide students

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with adequate utterances of communicated requests. Moreover, the findings from this study are expected to aid the designing of more effective samples of pragmatic materials for EFL learners. The study, hence, addresses the following questions:

1. To what extent is the current research on authentic RNGS/RVGS reflected in the dialogues of advanced level English coursebooks compiled by native authors and in those of native English movies?
2. Are there any significant differences between the frequencies and functions of the RNGS/RVGS used in the dialogues of the coursebooks and movies?

## **2. The Analytical Framework**

The study incorporated a typology adapted from Petraki and Bayes (2013). The modified typology included six common criteria for each request type, being identified as the most important contributions from three main DA theories – SAT (Trosborg, 1995), politeness theory (Alcón-Soler, Safont-Jordà&Martínez-Flor, 2005;Brown & Levinson, 1987; Brown & Yule, 1983), and CA (Liddicoat, 2007). This led to the development of eight coding schemes (Alcón-Soler et al., 2005; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Brown & Yule, 1983; Liddicoat, 2007; Trosborg, 1995). ).

The first criterion assessed the extent to which the coursebooks and movies: 1) expose students to different request forms, including: a) direct forms, conventionally indirect forms, and indirect forms. This criterion, derived from SAT, led to both the application of Trosborg's coding scheme (1995) for analysis of RNGS and the development of a proposed typology for assessment of RVGS.

The second to fourth criteria mainly based on the theory of politeness examined the efficiency of the textbooks and movies in: 2) adequately exploring the context of occurrence of requests, namely a) transactional and b) interactional; 3) identifying the politeness strategies, including: a) bald on record, b) positive politeness, and c) negative politeness; 4) mitigating request utterances through a) internal modification, b) external modification, and c) combination of mitigators. These criteria resulted in the establishment of four distinct coding schemes for textbook and movie evaluation: The transactional and interactional contexts of request types were explored in the textbooks and movies using a common coding scheme derived from Brown and Yule (1983); face was identified by applying the typology suggested by Brown and Levinson(1987); and modification devices of RINGS were calculated using the coding scheme by Alcón-Soler et al. (2005) while the strategies of mitigated RVGS were recognized through a typology developed based on the available data.

The last two criteria which were derived from research on CA investigated the role of textbooks and movies in: 5) emphasizing second pair parts: preferred and dispreferred responses, and 6) exposing students to multi-turn request forms: pre-sequences and re-requests. These two criteria were explored by using the two coding schemes developed by Liddicoat (2007).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Materials**

The materials for the study comprised the dialogues of the listening parts of the studentbooks and workbooks of five advanced level EFL coursebooks (i.e., *American Headway* (Soars & Soars, 2010), *Cutting Edge* (Cunningham, Moor & Comyns Carr, 2005), *Discussions A-Z* (Wallwork, 2005), *Landmark* (Haines,

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2008), *New English File* (Oxenden & Latham-Koenig, 2014)). These textbooks are expected to offer instances of the speech act of request in casual speech.

Furthermore, the dialogues in eight native English movies (i.e., *Broken City*, *The Girl Next Door*, *The Lucky One*, *The Roommate*, *Morning Glory*, *My Sister's Keeper*, *Non-Stop* and *Pride and Prejudice*) were used as samples of movie language. Each movie represented a genre or even a variety of genres such as drama, thriller, romantic drama, and mystery action, and displayed various social interactions among interlocutors. Accordingly, they provided a good sample of how a request is used in realistic, though not real, life situations.

### **3.2. Quantitative Analysis**

The study was quantitatively oriented to determine the extent to which the six criteria appear in the textbooks/movies. For this study phase, 275 dialogues, which either were transcribed or had ready-made transcripts in the textbooks, and 558 dialogues in the available transcripts of the selected English movies were collected for analysis. The result of analysis revealed request moves for nonverbal and verbal goods and services in the textbooks (68 & 722 respectively) and in the movies (985 & 1274 respectively). Whereas only 13 percent of the textbook dialogues included RNGS, this strategy was exploited in 53 percent of the movie dialogues. On the contrary, the same proportion of the textbook and movie dialogues, about 63 percent, included RVGS. In the next stage, after calculating the frequency of each subcategory, the sum of the same subcategories in the textbooks/movies was added up and their percentages were also calculated to represent request strategies of each of the 15 subcategories in the textbooks/movies in general. Moreover, since the total number of requests analyzed in the textbooks did not match those in the

movies, this disproportion was fixed mathematically by calculating the ratio of each RNGS/RVGS subcategory in the textbooks according to a total of 985 and 1274 (the total frequencies of RNGS and RVGS in the movies respectively) in order to make the comparison more meaningful. Therefore, the quantitative analysis assessed the extent that the textbooks/movies adhered to the criteria by counting the examples of oral requests found in the two corpora. Yates' Chi-Square test was also run for possible significant differences between the requestive speech acts in the textbooks and movies.

In text analysis, there is always the danger of wrong assignments of the categories to the data. Hence, in order to enhance the reliability of the analysis, after one month, a quarter of the whole data was analyzed once again by one of the researchers through the same procedure. Then the Pearson correlation coefficient between the two ratings was calculated. Finally, the correlations of the coding schemes between the first and second ratings were calculated and the results, as shown in Table 1, indicated a close proximity in identifying the types of request speech acts in the two ratings.

*Table 1. Frequency of Speech Act Categories in Two Ratings*

	MTRF		ESPP		MD		R&F		TC		RF		
	RR	PS	DR	PR	CM	EM	IM	NP	PP	IC	TC	IF	DF
1 <sup>st</sup> R	8	2	63	74	54	39	146	53	360	413	350	15	613
2 <sup>nd</sup> R	8	2	63	74	45	63	131	57	365	407	356	15	609
PC	0.998												



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*Note.* 1<sup>st</sup> R: 1<sup>st</sup> Rating; 2<sup>nd</sup> R: 2<sup>nd</sup> Rating; PC: Pearson Correlation; RF: Request Forms→ DF: Direct forms, CIF: Conventionally Indirect Forms, IF: Indirect Forms; TC: Types of Context→ TC: Transactional Context, IC: Interactional Context; R&F: Relationship & Face→ BR: Bald-on Record, PP: Positive Politeness, NP: Negative Politeness; MD: Modification Devices→ IM: Internal Modification, EM: External Modification, CM: Combination of Mitigators; ESPP: Emphasis on Second Pair Parts→ PR: Preferred Responses, DR: Dispreferred Responses; MTRF: Multi-Turn Request Forms→ PS: Pre-Sequences, RR: Re-Requests.

To improve the reliability of analysis, 20 percent of the whole data was analyzed by an experienced researcher, and the coefficient of Pearson correlation between the two analyses was calculated. Correlation coefficient of the categories also displayed a marginal difference between the two raters, and this proximity in analysis guaranteed consistency of the procedure(see Table 2).

**Table 2. Frequency of Speech Act Categories by Two Raters**

	RF		TC		R&F			MD			ESPP		MTRF		
	DF	CIF	IF	TC	IC	BR	PP	NP	IM	EM	CM	PR	DR	PS	RR
R 1	490	108	12	280	330	268	288	42	121	31	45	59	51	1	5
R 2	483	117	10	271	339	276	283	39	145	20	32	61	49	1	4
PC															0.998

*Note.* R 1: Rater 1, R 2: Rater 2.

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What follows presents the findings obtained from each coding scheme (see Table 3).

Table 3. RNGS in the Textbooks vs. Movies

		MTRF		RR		PS		ESP		MD		R&F		TC		RF		DF		
		IM	EM	CM	PR	DR	PS	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR	
Textbooks	T	8	10	10	23	6	4	1	19	19	24	19	19	54	14	6	32	30		
	%	11.8	14.7	14.7	33.8	8.8	5.9	1.5	27.9	27.9	35.3	27.9	27.9	79.4	20.6	8.8	47.1	44.1		
	FT	116	145	145	333	87	58	15	275	275	348	275	275	782	203	87	464	434		
	%	11.8	14.7	14.7	33.8	8.8	5.9	1.5	27.9	27.9	35.3	27.9	27.9	79.4	20.6	8.8	47.1	44.1		
	Movies																			
	T	228	104	110	76	72	6	22	22	446	128	446	385	385	621	305	654	654		
	%	23.1	10.5	11.2	7.7	7.3	0.6	2.2	2.2	45.3	13	45.3	39.1	39.1	63.1	31	66.4	66.4		

Note: T=Total, FT=Fixed Total.

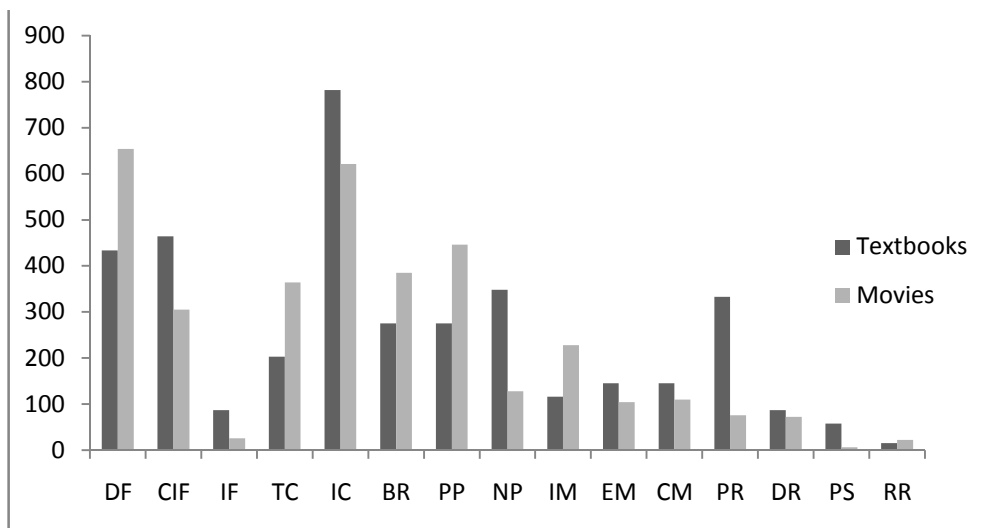
The total frequencies of most request subcategories in the textbooks showed different patterns in comparison with those in the movies. The highest frequency of the first category in the textbooks, request forms, is attributed to conventionally indirect forms followed by direct and indirect forms while direct forms constitute the most frequently used category in the movies followed by conventionally indirect and indirect forms respectively.

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Exploring the context of requests in the textbooks revealed that like movies, the interactional context of request occurrence surpassed their transactional context in total frequency although the frequency of transactional context in the movies was about 1.8 times more than that in the textbooks. In addition, negative politeness was the most frequent face strategy in the textbooks followed by balanced frequencies of positive politeness and bald on record strategies whereas positive politeness constituted the highest face frequency in the movies and frequencies of bald on record and negative politeness appeared next.

Of mitigators, as strategies that affect the degree of politeness in request utterances, the highest frequency in the textbooks belonged to the equal occurrences of both combinations of mitigators and external modification followed by internal modification while this order of modification devices in movies was in contrast to that of the textbooks and approximately half of the mitigators in movies belonged to internal modification and the other half constituted a combination of mitigators and external modification respectively.

The data on the fifth category of the table indicated that preferred responses were followed by dispreferred responses in the textbooks. Moreover, the frequency of preferred responses in the textbooks was about 4.8 times more than that in the movies. Two variants of multi-turn request forms did not show the same pattern in both the textbooks and movies. In contrast to movies, re-requests were preceded by pre-sequences in the textbooks and surprisingly pre-sequences in the textbooks were about 9.6 times as much as those in the movies. Figure 1 demonstrates the proportion of request strategies in the two corpora:



**Figure 1. The Proportion of the Strategies of RINGS in the Textbooks Vs. Movies**

Yate's Chi-Square tests were applied for each subcategory in order to find out any significant differences between the strategies of RINGS in the textbooks and movies. In fact, Yate's correction factor is an adjustment of the formula in Pearson's Chi-Square test. It is chiefly applied when degree of freedom is equal to one or at least one cell of the contingency table has an expected count smaller than five. The effect of Yates' correction is to prevent overestimation of statistical significance for small data. See Table 4 for the gist of analyses:

**Table 4. Chi-Square Value for each of RINGS' Subcategories**

	RF			TC		R&F			MD		ESPP		MTRF		
	DF	CIF	IF	TC	IC	BR	PP	NP	IM	EM	CM	PR	DR	PS	RR
DF	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Value	44	32	32	45	18	18	40	101	36	6	4	160	1	41	1

Note.  $P < 0.05$ , Critical Value = 3.841

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The Chi-Square value for direct, conventionally indirect and indirect forms showed significant differences between the frequency and function of each of the subcategories in the textbooks and movies. In addition, similar differences were observed between the frequency and type of the contexts of request occurrence, including transactional and interactional and of politeness strategies, namely bald on records and positive and negative politeness in the two corpora.

The Chi-Square value for one variant of both second pair parts and multi-turn request forms, including preferred responses to requests and pre-sequences, showed significant differences in the two corpora. Dispreferred responses and re-requests, as the other variants of this strategy, demonstrated no differences between RNGS in the textbooks and movies.

### **3.3. Qualitative Analysis**

The analysis was also conducted qualitatively to discuss the depth and adequacy of request strategies used in the textbooks and movies. Qualifying the materials provided rich information about to what extent pragmatic nature of the requests, and cultural value of the face and context of requests were discussed, to what extent the requests were mitigated through softening devices, and what types of responses, pre-sequences and re-requests accompanied request moves. Now see the following analytical qualifications:

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#### *Exposure to types of request forms*

Results indicated that despite their low frequency, various direct requests were found in the textbooks. On the other side, the frequency of conventionally indirect request utterances used in the textbooks was greater than that in the movies; however, these requests marked less variety in the textbook utterances.

In fact, the textbooks lacked request utterances conveying *want* statements, as representatives of the speaker-oriented conditions, and some forms of suggestory formulae and permission form, as representatives of the hearer-oriented conditions. Some forms of the conventionally indirect requests only present in the movies are instantiated below:

Anna: *I wanna sue my parents for the rights to my own body.*

(Want Statement) (My Sister's Keeper)

Tracy: *How about turning on the light?*

(Suggestory Formulae) (Roommate)

Mr Darcy: *May I have the next dance, Miss Elizabeth?*

(Permission) (Pride & Prejudice)

Generally, although the textbooks included various forms of indirect requests including reasonableness and obviousness, they excessively dealt with the same strategy compared to those of the movies.

In addition, higher frequencies of interactional contexts in the textbooks and transactional contexts in the movies led to significant differences between the two corpora. In fact, the excessive usage of the requests in interactional contexts prevents the textbooks from adequately dealing with transactional contexts of request occurrence. Inordinate short dialogues between friends, family members, and passengers on a plane are the only instances of interactional contexts in the textbooks while movies depict more various interactional contexts despite their lower frequency, such as relations between friends, passengers on a plane, family members, roommates, even friendly talks between colleagues, professors and college students.

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The low frequency of transactional contexts in the textbooks refers to transmission of information only between colleagues and some extremely short dialogues in the textbooks' indefinite situations which generally depict transactions of information in formal settings between interlocutors, such as:

4.     A:            *I'd like to reserve a table, please.*  
          B:            *Certainly. What name, please.*

(American Headway, Studentbook, p.76)

On the other hand, transactional requests in the movies are mainly realized through flight attendant-passenger, plane passenger-plane passenger, counselor-client, judge-client, colleague-colleague, doctor-patient, police officer-people, professor-college student, customer-shop keeper, and interviewer-interviewee relations:

5.     Job interviewer:    *... we want the show to have that youthful energy. And we are so impressed with what you have done with Daybreak.*  
          Becky:            *Well, thank you very much. I appreciate it.*

(Morning Glory)

#### *Relationship and face*

The paucity of bald on record strategies in the textbooks, in contrast to the movies, was assigned to lack of urgency situations and noisy conditions and low frequency of task-oriented conditions in the textbooks, as shown in the following examples:

6.     Keith:            *Walk back to me. Walk back to me right here!*  
          Ben:            *I can't, Dad. It's too shaky.*  
          Keith:         *Wait right there, I'm coming to you.*

(Great Urgency)

(The Lucky One)

7.     Bill:            *Come with me nancy*

(Task Orientation)

(Non-Stop)

Similarly, positive politeness in the movies were teeming with solidarity in-group identity markers such as (contracted) address forms, contractions, ellipses, dialects, slangs, and jargons. Some instances of both speakers' and hearers' inclusion in the same activity, and reason-asking strategies were also found in the movies. Some of these strategies even change every request's negative politeness and bald on record utterances into positive politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 111) as instantiated below:

8. Lydia: *Lizzie, lend me some money.*  
(Contracted Address Forms) (Pride & Prejudice)
9. Bill: *Mind if I take a look at your phone?*  
(Ellipsis) (Non-Stop)
10. Beth: *Why don't you try telling me a joke?*  
(Reason-Asking Strategy) (The Lucky One)

On the other hand, the only positive politeness strategy used with the textbooks is the inclusion of both speaker and hearer in the same activity. Furthermore, despite the higher frequency of negative politeness in the textbooks, conventional forms of indirect requests are the only source of this kind of politeness in the same dataset while the movies report instances of both conventionally indirect requests and hedges.

#### *Modification devices*

According to the results, the frequency of internal mitigators in the textbooks is about half of the frequency of its counterpart in the movies while the frequency of external mitigators and combinations of mitigators leads to a slight difference between the textbook and movie dialogues. Hesitators were extremely low in both the textbooks and movies revealing the controlled formulation of the language in the dialogues of the textbooks and movies which is different from authentic language use (Martínez-Flor&Usó-Juan, 2006b). Moreover, of all the internally and externally mitigated requests, no traces of



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hedges and expanders were found in the textbooks and movies. Except for intensifiers, an internal mitigator, the other occurrences of internal and external mitigators are explored whether alone or in combination with other mitigators in the textbooks in comparison with the existing strategies in the movies even though because of limited interactions, no sufficient instances of each type of mitigators are included in the textbooks. Finally, as regards the combination of mitigators, we have found a wide range of possibilities, in that both types of modification make up different combinations in the movies. Some instances of these combinations are as follows:

11. Sara: Rebecca, please forgive me, okay?  
(attention-getter + please + appealers) (The Roommate)
12. Colleen: Can you just step away, just for a second?  
(downtoner + understatement) (Morning Glory)
13. Billy: Actually, I think I need a few more days.  
I got things nailed down.  
(intensifier + downtoner+ grounder) (Broken City)

#### *Emphasis on second pair parts*

High frequency of preferred responses in the textbooks could mainly be due to the decontextualized formulation of verbally short and straightforward answers to requests through audio means while facial expressions and prosodic features which play an important role in face to face interactions were not present in textbook conversations. On the other hand, the movies presented a variety of indirect forms of preferred and dispreferred responses. For instance, Mayor requests his wife not to stay awake and wait for him late at night. In a response, Cathleen provides a question which directly shows the need for information while it is indirectly implied as an ironically preferred response to his request:

14. Mayor: *Don't wait up, dear.*

Cathleen: *Have I ever?*

(Broken City)

Obviously, the textbooks are void of any responses to the existing request structure in their lessons in order to familiarize language learners with pragmatically appropriate way of responding to such requested action.

#### *Multi-turn request forms*

Although the frequency of pre-sequences is higher in the textbooks than that in the movies, different features are found between pre-sequence formulations in the two corpora. Firstly, half of the request head acts include more than one pre-sequence in the textbooks while only one pre-sequence accompanies each request head act in the movies. This difference may be due to the intensity of information incorporated in the textbook dialogues in order to be more economical. The appearance of more pre-sequences in each request act certainly needs the formulation of responses showing uncertainty to help the continuation of pre-sequencing in the textbooks while the pre-sequences in the movies are mostly provided with straightforward answers. Notice the following instance in a textbook:

15. A: *Karen ... hi ... are you in the middle of something?*

(Pre-Sequence)

B: *Sort of ...*

A: *Well, shall I come back later?*

(Pre-Sequence)

B: *No, no it's all right ... what can I do for you?*

A: *Sorry to disturb you ... I'm having a lot of trouble with my computer.  
Every time I try to print something I just get an error message.*

(Cutting Edge, Studentbook, p. 35)

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The first pre-sequence is unclearly responded by Speaker B; therefore, Speaker A reformulated another pre-sequence to re-examine the appropriateness of the conditions for requesting. Although uncertain responses to pre-sequences are a prerequisite of authentic interactions, their excessive uses in the textbooks prevent the occurrence of a request contextual feature, that is, request abortion.

No occurrence of request abortion is viewed in the textbooks' dialogues. Although one case of dispreferred response to pre-sequence (a prerequisite of request abortion) is observed in one of the textbooks' dialogues, prevented from aborting the request by an immediate formulation of another pre-sequence. In fact, request abandoning is a common feature of authentic dialogues and occurs in everyday interactions (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990).

Analysis of the dialogues revealed more variety in the re-requests of the movies. Searching indicates the textbooks' inadequate engagement with these strategies due to the limited interactional conversations. In fact, the movies' re-requests tend to be direct in the dialogues of actors. Consider the following instance:

16.      Logans' Sister:            *Honey, let's make Uncle Logan feel welcome.*  
            Logan's Nephews:           *Mom!*  
            Logans' Sister :            *Go outside and play.*  
            Logan's Nephews:           *Come on, we were just about to win.*  
            Logans' Sister:            *Go outside now.*

(The Lucky One)

As the dialogue indicates, more direct forms of re-requests are used than the original request forms. Now look at an instance from a textbook:

17. A: *We have a family with three small children. Unfortunately, they're sitting separately, and obviously they would prefer to sit together.*

B: *Yes ... and you want me to move.*

A: *Would that be at all possible?*

B: *Well, I'm very comfortable here actually ...*

*I did ask for an aisle seat.*

(An Indirectly Dispreferred Response)

A: *Well, we can move you to an aisle seat if you prefer. We would very much appreciate it if you could help us here.*

(Re-Request)

(Cutting Edge, Studentbook, p. 35)

In this instance, an indirectly dispreferred response to request is repaired by a conventionally indirect re-request. Realization of request strategy in this example like many other textbook examples draws the attention on the gap between the findings of theoretical research in pragmatics and instructional materials. In fact, according to the research findings, native speakers tend to use more direct forms of re-requests than original request forms (Kim, Shin & Cai; 1998); therefore, the use of more direct forms of this strategy must have superiority over other re-request forms in the textbooks unless language learners feel uncomfortable while facing such forms in real settings.

### **3.4. Quantitative Analysis**

#### *Request for Verbal Goods and Services*

The strategies of RVGS used in the textbooks and movies were analyzed and the findings are demonstrated in Table 5:

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**Table 5. Type, Frequency and Percentage of RVGS in the Textbooks vs. Movies**

	MTRF		RR		PS		ESPP		MD		R&F		TC		RF		DF	
Textbooks	T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	603	
	%																83.5	
	FT																1064	
	%																83.5	
	Movies	T	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	1164
		%	0.45	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	91.3
		FT																
		%																
		IM	142	142	142	142	142	142	142	142	142	142	142	142	142	142	142	142
		%	19.7	19.7	19.7	19.7	19.7	19.7	19.7	19.7	19.7	19.7	19.7	19.7	19.7	19.7	19.7	19.7
		NP	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
		%	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5
		PP	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266
		%	36.8	36.8	36.8	36.8	36.8	36.8	36.8	36.8	36.8	36.8	36.8	36.8	36.8	36.8	36.8	36.8
		BR	416	416	416	416	416	416	416	416	416	416	416	416	416	416	416	416
		%	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.6
IC		144	144	144	144	144	144	144	144	144	144	144	144	144	144	144	144	
%		19.9	19.9	19.9	19.9	19.9	19.9	19.9	19.9	19.9	19.9	19.9	19.9	19.9	19.9	19.9	19.9	
TC		578	578	578	578	578	578	578	578	578	578	578	578	578	578	578	578	
%		80.1	80.1	80.1	80.1	80.1	80.1	80.1	80.1	80.1	80.1	80.1	80.1	80.1	80.1	80.1	80.1	
IF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
CIF	119	119	119	119	119	119	119	119	119	119	119	119	119	119	119	119		
%	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5		

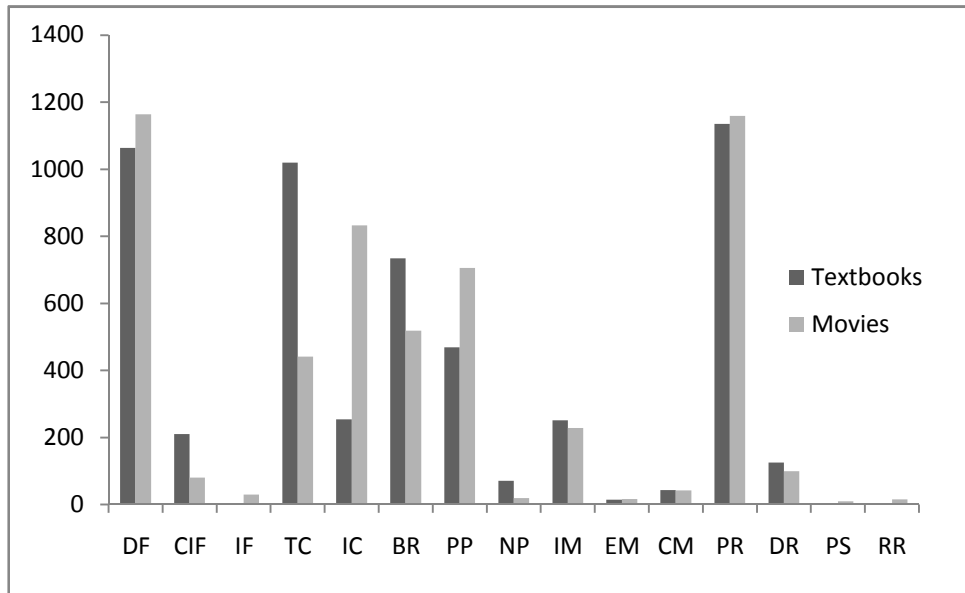
The findings show that direct forms constitute the highest frequency of request followed by conventionally indirect and indirect forms respectively. Indirect forms constitute an insignificant percentage of the movies and they were approximately zero in the textbooks.

Applying the coding scheme by Brown and Yule (1983) to the textbooks showed that unlike movies, the frequency of requests in transactional contexts outweighs that of interactional contexts. In addition, the proportions of the transactional contexts in the textbooks and of interactional contexts in the movies are about 2.3 and 3.27 times as much as those of their counterparts in the corpora respectively.

Face of requests were explored in the textbooks and results indicated that in general the highest frequency is attributed to bald on record and frequencies of positive politeness and negative politeness strategies come next while the opposite order was set in the movies. Moreover, both the movies and textbooks followed the same pattern of the distribution of mitigators. While internal modification manifested the highest frequency of requests in the two corpora, only one fourth of the data was assigned to combination of mitigators and external modification.

Similarly, preferred responses to requests in comparison with dispreferred responses included the extremely higher percentage of the two corpora. In addition, no occurrence of pre-sequences and re-requests was observed in the textbooks and the same strategies also constituted only an insignificant percentage of the movies' requests(see Figure 2).

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*Figure 2. The Proportion of the Strategies of RVGS in the Textbooks vs. Movies*

To identify any significant differences between each subcategory of the RVGS in the textbooks and its counterpart in the movies, Yate’s Chi-Squared tests were used (see Table 6).

**Table 6. Chi-Square Value for each of RVGS’ Subcategories**

	RF			TC		R&F			MD		ESPP		MTRF		
	DF	CIF	IF	TC	IC	BR	PP	NP	IM	EM	CM	PR	DR	PS	RR
DF	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Value	4	57	28	229	307	36	47	29	1	0	1	1	3	2	3

*Note.*  $P < 0.05$ , Critical Value = 3.841

As evident from the table, the Chi-Square value for the three single subcategories of request forms is greater than the critical value especially for conventionally indirect and indirect forms showing significant differences between the type and frequency of these subcategories in the textbooks and movies. Considering the context of requests, differences were observed between function and frequency of each of transactional and interactional contexts in the textbooks and movies. In addition, Chi-Square value for the three separate subcategories of politeness strategies also alluded to the gap between the textbooks and movies.

Comparing the Chi-Square value for each of the request mitigators with its critical value revealed no significant differences between the two corpora. Similarly, each variant of the second pair parts and of multi-turn request forms in the textbooks was compared with its counterpart in the movies and no difference was observed.

### **3.5. Qualitative Analysis**

#### *Request for Verbal Goods and Services*

##### *Exposure to types of request forms*

Textbooks have many common direct strategies with movies except for the obligation strategy which is lacking in the textbooks although the number of this strategy is also extremely low in the movies:

18. Billy:           ... *But first, you have to tell me what's going on.*

(Obligation)       (Broken City)

Because of the difficulty in distinguishing between elliptical yes/no questions, having direct requests and declarative yes/no questions, having conventionally indirect requests, these forms along with elliptical WH questions and declarative WH questions of the textbooks and movies are



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categorized into the same subcategory of colloquial forms, a direct request category as in:

19. Jen: *You fly much?*

Bill: *All the time, actually.*

(Non-Stop)

On the other side, not only is the frequency of conventionally indirect requests higher in the textbooks but different functions of the same strategy are also deployed in the two datasets. Note the following examples.

20. Ryan: *So why don't you just tell me how you're going to win this thing?*

(Suggestory Formulae)

(Broken City)

21. Ruth: *The thing I want to know is, Meggie... What are you gonna get out of it?*

(Desire)

(The Girl Next Door)

In fact, the main difference between the conventional types of indirect requests in the two datasets lies in the types of context. With regard to the dominant transactional context of request occurrence in the textbooks, those request forms lessening the degree of imposition accompany the request utterances while the overcoming interactional context of the movies' requests leads to the use of more solidarity strategies.

Additionally, indirect forms of requests were not used in the textbooks. Indirectness of RVGS in the movies was realized through metaphoric expressions and apologizing strategies.

22. Murdock: *You club a herd of penguins for that getup?*

(Metaphoric Utterance)

(Broken City)

23. Ellie: *Are you crazy?*

Logan: *I beg your pardon, ma'am?*

Ellie: *My granddaughter thinks you might be.*

(Apologizing Expression)

(The Lucky One)

Moreover, the extremely higher frequency of transactional contexts in the textbooks than their counterpart in the movies creates a gap between the realization of requests in instructional materials and close to real-life data. In fact, high frequency of interviewer-interviewee dialogues constitutes the main sources of realization of requests in transactional contexts:

24. Interviewer: *Could you talk to me a little bit about how you think the foreign correspondent's role has changed during your career?*

Simon Winchester: *Well, a lot of things have changed ... the most notable is the general public's lack of interest in things foreign ...*

(American Headway, Studentbook, p. 57)

On the contrary, the movies include more various transactional situations. Besides the interviewing context, they depict flight attendant-passenger, train passenger-train passenger, plane passenger-plane passenger, counselor-client, colleague-colleague, doctor-patient, police officer-ordinary people, professor-college student, and customer-shop keeper relations.

On the other hand, the textbooks' excessive dealing with the transactional context of request occurrence leads to an inadequate coverage of requests' interactional context. Interactional contexts in the textbooks are limited to short dialogues between family members, friends, and passengers on an

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airplane. In addition, in some instances, the interactional dialogues are too short to determine the exact role of interlocutors, as in:

25. A: *Why did you slam the door in my face?*  
B: *It was an accident. I really didn't mean to.*

(American Headway, Studentbook, p. 9)

In fact, due to sufficient interactional contexts, the movies cover the realization of the requests in definite, various, and intimate contexts including not just those of the textbooks, but also roommate relations, and even friendly and private talks between colleagues, professors and college students, and doctor and patient relations:

26. Becky: *Are you drunk?*  
Mike: *Insufficiently.*

(A Short Dialogue between Colleagues) (Morning Glory)

### *Relationship and face*

According to the coding scheme by Brown and Levinson (1987), bald on record constitutes the highest frequency of face work in the textbooks which differs significantly from the frequency of its counterpart in the movies. In fact, the textbooks' interviewing contexts constitute the main sources of RVGS and an inordinate number of the requests are formulated baldly in such contexts.

As mentioned before, bald on record is the usual feature of the direct forms of the language while these forms are exposed to extreme face changes in the movies. In fact, the main reason for the direct requests' face changing in the movies is the dominance of interactional context. Positive politeness strategies such as solidarity in-group identity markers are frequently used with most direct and conventionally indirect requests in such context (see example 28 & 29 for the use of ellipsis and address term with direct requests). On the other hand, none of the textbooks' and movies' requests is found in situations of great

urgency or noisy conditions and there is no difference between the appearance of the direct requests acting baldly in the movies and those of the textbooks.

Pseudo-agreement and in-group identity markers such as contractions, ellipses and (contracted) address terms are the main sources of the requests' positive face in the movies. On the contrary, the textbooks only provide limited examples of pseudo-agreements and ellipses.

27. Tom: *So, where you off to?*

(Pseudo-Agreement) (Non-Stop)

28. Becky: *Eat bran all day? Fiber, Fiber, Fiber?*

(Ellipsis) (Morning Glory)

29. Brian: *Hey, sweetie, where's your locket?*

(Address Terms) (My Sister's Keeper)

The tendency for more examples of negative face in the textbooks than its counterpart in the movies leads to significant differences between the two datasets. In fact, conventionally indirect requests are the only source of negative face in the textbooks while the movies represent the same form of requests along with limited examples of hedges. The dominance of negative politeness in the textbooks is also mainly due to the inordinate realization of requests in interviewing contexts. Therefore, many negative strategies (although all are of the same conventionally indirect type) are employed in such contexts to soften the degree of imposition between interviewers and interviewees.

#### *Modification devices*

The findings show insignificant differences between categories of mitigators in the textbooks with their counterparts in the movies. Comparison reveals the

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textbooks' coverage of understatement and disclaimer strategies with request utterances while such strategies are totally lacking in the movies; instead, the preparator strategy is alternatively utilized through the requests used in the movies. Additionally, more variety is found through combinations of mitigators in the movies, specifically combinations of attention-getters with the other strategies.

#### *Emphasis on second pair parts*

In this study, responses to both Yes/No questions and WH questions are included in the analyses. Preferred responses in this category are defined as those responses which provide the interlocutors with facts and information while dispreferred responses occur in situations where interlocutors directly or indirectly avoid responding. After analysis, the findings show no differences between preferred and dispreferred responses to requests in the textbooks and their counterparts in the movies. However, a closer analysis reveals that the way responses are presented in textbooks is rather different from the way they are used in movies.

In fact, utterances do not just describe states of affairs but also state facts which are either true or false. Therefore, the meaningfulness of the utterances should be tested for their truth or falsity (Austin, 1962) which justifies another difference between the conversations in the textbooks and movies. The truth of the proposition expressed in responses to requests in the textbooks cannot be judged and, consequently, they are considered to be true. That is, the text does not provide enough information to judge the truth or falsity of the proposition while responses are not always true in the movies, and one can recognize their truth or falsity from the context. For instance, in *The Lucky One*, the excuse which Principal Miller provides as a response to Beth's request along with her

facial expressions provide enough clues for Beth to notice the falsity of Miller's utterance:

30. Beth: *I was wondering if you've found anybody to take over for Julie's class next semester.*

Principal Miller: *I don't know. Have I?*  
(The Lucky One)

Being able to recognize a true response from an untrue one is a necessary skill in real life language use; however, this is ignored in the textbook dialogues. Actually, with regard to the limited contextual clues that textbooks are able to provide, it is difficult to use untrue statements as responses to requests in textbook conversations and expect language learners to understand them. Therefore, certain communicative strategies should be employed to familiarize language learners with such uses of the second pair parts if the purpose of ELT programs is to prepare language learners for employing their linguistic knowledge in real settings.

#### *Multi-turn request forms*

Regarding multi-turn request forms such as pre-sequences and re-requests, no differences are found between the use of each form in the textbooks and their variants in the movies. In fact, besides the textbooks' lack of such forms, the number of multi-turn requests is extremely low in the movies. The most common form of pre-sequences for achieving a desired action in the movies is:

31. Anna: *Can I ask you something?*  
Judge: *Shoot.*  
Anna: *What was it like when she died?*

(My Sister's Keeper)

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As seen in the above example, pre-sequences are subtle devices that may achieve a desired action while avoiding going on-record with a request. On the other hand, re-requests are used in situations where the desired actions are not achieved; therefore, the requested actions are reconstructed such as:

32. David: *Why haven't you eaten?*

Meg: *I can't.*

David: *How come?*

(Re-Request)

Meg *I'm not supposed to.*

David: *I don't get it.*

(Re-Request)

Meg: *Ruth says I am fat.*

(The Girl Next Door)

At first, Meg avoids providing justification for her hunger. Only after David insists on knowing the incident by reformulating the following re-requests, does she describe the happening. Therefore, it is suggested that examples of multi-turn requests be included in pragmatically appropriate materials unless language learners feel uncomfortable while facing such forms in authentic settings.

## **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

The analysis revealed that the conversational models in the EFL textbooks provide the learners with an inaccurate, decontextualized, and simplistic presentation of communicated requests. This is evident in their insufficient attention to different request forms that exemplify an unrealistic form of communicated requests. Less information is also given about the cultural value of establishing solidarity or softening the force of face threatening requests by

means of combining certain mitigating expressions. The dialogues in the textbooks fall short of both conveying contextually rich information to help learners make appropriate requests, and providing metapragmatic information about the relationship between speakers and addressees, for example whether interlocutors are friends or co-workers, whether they are speaking at home or in the workplace. Furthermore, the textbooks reviewed here do not appear either to present enough contextual clues to evaluate the truth or falsity of preferred and dispreferred responses or to take a variety of indirect forms of such responses into account. Little mention is also made in the dialogues of the various multi-turn request forms specifically.

The analyses indicated that since the textbook dialogues are mainly contrived, the important information on underlying social strategies of requests in the textbook dialogues is often overlooked entirely, so that the requests in ELT textbooks differ greatly from the way in which close to naturalistic requests pattern out. Results from the current study corroborate previous studies that point to the mismatch between the nature of requests in textbook dialogues and pragmatics research findings (Fernández-Guerra & Martínez-Flor, 2003; Martínez-Flor & Fernández-Guerra, 2002). In fact, many studies acknowledge that most currently popular ELT textbooks continue to focus on the acquisition of linguistic competence, with insufficient attention to a fuller communicative competence (Fernandez-Guerra & Martinez-Flor, 2003; Petraki & Bayes, 2013; Uso-Juan, 2008; Vellenga, 2004; Wong, 2002). Yet it is generally accepted that the achievement of communicative competence involves not only linguistic but also sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). This implies the scarcity of features of authentic/ close to authentic discourse found in ESL/EFL materials. In fact, one of the dangers of relying on inauthentic materials is that language learners



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often have difficulty in communicating appropriately with native speakers, despite a good command of language proficiency, which in turn may be judged as being rude or uncooperative in cross-cultural interactions (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004).

Additionally, contrary to Brown and Yule's (1983) finding, that RNGS and RVGS usually occur in transactional contexts, the secondary findings of the present study suggest the main occurrence of the same requests in interactional contexts of the movies. This difference in the type of contexts leads to different functional realizations of the requests in the two findings.

There are certain limitations imposed on textbooks which in most cases lead to the inappropriate choice of certain types of request speech acts. Knowledge of such limitations and their effects on the artificial realization of the textbook contents will help teachers realize where there need to be further instructions or even to use request samples in audiovisual materials as an aid to instructions.

The present study, like many of its predecessors, is not without its limitations. The findings of this analysis are limited by the selection of the criteria drawn from the three discourse analytic theories. Another limitation is that only advanced-level textbooks were examined. Future research should consider examining the ways in which different levels of textbooks incorporate pragmatic information and authentic conversations. The third limitation is that the close to naturalistic language of the movies was used as the bases for evaluation of textbook language. In order to have a more reliable comparison, further research can be conducted on the comparison of textbook conversations with spontaneous conversations by native speakers. In addition, other investigations can focus not only on the written mode of language but

also on comparative studies of other basic features of dialogues, such as repairs, turn-taking, adjacency pairs and the like.

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