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The Report committee for Mansi Jagdeep Shah Certifies that this is the approved version  
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**The Role of L1 English and L2 Hindi in L3 Spanish Acquisition:  
A Study of Pragmatic Transfer in Request and Apology Situations**

**APPROVED BY  
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

**Supervisor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Dale A. Koike

\_\_\_\_\_

Chiyo Nishida

**The Role of L1 English and L2 Hindi in L3 Spanish Acquisition:**

**A Study of Pragmatic Transfer in Request and Apology Situations**

**by**

**Mansi Jagdeep Shah, B.Com, B.A**

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## **Dedication**

This report is dedicated to my lovely daughter Anishka.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would first like to thank my mentor and supervisor Professor Dale Koike for encouraging me to attend graduate school, for helping me bring my report idea to fruition, and being so patient with me along the way. Your advice and support were invaluable and I truly appreciate it with all my heart.

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# **The Role of L1 English and L2 Hindi in L3 Spanish Acquisition**

## **A Study of Pragmatic Transfer in Request and Apology Situations**

Mansi Jagdeep Shah, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2009

Supervisor: Dale Koike

Transfer theory proposes that language learners rely on knowledge of a previous language to acquire a new language and that they base their learning on past experiences and information. The assumption is that there is transfer of knowledge from adult learners' L1 to their L2 (Odlin 1989; Kecskes and Papp 2000; Koike and Flanzer 2004).

This study analyses the transfer of pragmatic knowledge in request and apology situations from L1 or L2 to L3: here the L1 is English, the L2 is Hindi, the national language of India and the L3 is Spanish. There are three groups of participants in the study: high school students of Spanish in the U.S. who are heritage speakers of Hindi; high school students of Spanish whose L1 is English; and high school students in India whose L1 is Hindi. This study investigates language acquisition patterns of Hindi- and English-speaking bilingual students studying Spanish and compares them to those of native English-speaking students learning Spanish to determine if the students' knowledge of Hindi affects their production of Spanish speech acts. It specifically targets the transfer of pragmatic knowledge in request and apology situations from L1 English or L2 Hindi to L3 Spanish. The results demonstrate that learners perceived a great degree of typological distance between Hindi and Spanish. This perceived distance might be the reason why only scant evidence of transfer of pragmatic knowledge from the L2 of the bilingual speakers to their L3 is evident. However, a greater degree of transfer from the learners' L1 English to their L3 Spanish was demonstrated by the heritage Hindi speakers. The limited amount of transfer from L2 Hindi to L3 Spanish that is evidenced can be attributed to the fact that Hindi heritage speakers have lived in the US longer than they have lived (if ever) in India, which has led them to be affected by U.S. culture. A strong desire for assimilation, which is often expressed by high school students, could also be an important factor leading to more transfer from learner's L1 English to their L3 Spanish as they would probably reject their heritage language Hindi in favor of their native or adopted language, English.

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## **1. Introduction**

Transfer Theory (Selinker 1972) is a predominant second language (L2) acquisition theory that proposes that language learners rely on knowledge of a previous language to acquire a new language and that they base their learning on past experiences and information. In *Language transfer* language learners apply knowledge from their previously known languages in learning another language. Odlin (1989: 127) defined transfer between languages as “the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired.” The assumption is that there is transfer of pragmatic knowledge from adult learners’ first language (L1) or other languages to their L2 or L3 (Odlin, 1989; Kecskes and Papp, 2000; Koike and Flanzer 2004). Kasper and Rose (2002) pointed out that adult language learners already possess a universal linguistic competence from their L1, which influences the way they behave when speaking the L2. This claim has also been supported by other researchers such as Félix-Brasdefer (2007: 278), who argues in a study on L2 Spanish requests that “the socio-pragmatic knowledge necessary to perform a request may already be in place” for learners of an L2.

Cenoz (2003) noted that the study of multilingualism demonstrates an obvious presence of complex patterns of transfer from an L1 in the perception and production of a learner’s L2. However, transfer has been found to be a complex phenomenon that is influenced by a myriad of factors. Sharwood Smith (1978: 348) noted that “language learning cannot be seen as just a matter of linguistic hiccups from native language to target language. There are other factors that may influence the process of acquisition such as attitude, motivation, other languages known, and so forth.” For example, Ringbom (1987), Möhle (1989) and Poulisse (1990) have observed that the level of proficiency in the target language is a factor that affects cross-linguistic

influences, where learners at a lower level of proficiency are reported to transfer more elements from their L1 than learners at a higher level of proficiency. Dewaele (2003) studied the effects of contextual formality on cross-linguistic transfer and found that the less formal the situation, the fewer the instances of transfer.

This observation leads to the question that if interlanguage transfer does indeed exist, in what way and to what extent does each previously known language affect the acquisition of a third language (L3)? What factors influence this transfer? As Selinker (1983: 33) observed, “the extent of our information about transfer and hence our understanding of it is quite limited and uneven,” leading us to the implication that further research in this field is much needed .

Kellerman (1983) proposed that some of the factors known to affect interlanguage transfer include actual knowledge of the L3 by the learner, the degree of L2 knowledge by learners and typological distance between languages and learners’ perception of this L2-L3 distance. He defines typology as the structural similarities that exist between languages and explains that typological distance embodies the differences that exist between these languages. The greater the differences between the languages, the greater the typological distance between them. The reflection of this structural and cultural closeness or distance in the learner’s mind is what is referred to as “perceived typological distance” or psychotypology. Although Kellerman (1983) does not include the notion of pragmatic knowledge in his definition of typological distance, this study assumes that the inter language transfer of pragmatics is also affected by typological distance.

This current study hypothesizes the perceived typological distance between Hindi and Spanish to be one of the factors affecting transfer of knowledge from L2 to L3. Following a study by Koike and Flanzer (2004), this investigation deals with language acquisition patterns of

Hindi- and English- speaking bilingual students studying L3 Spanish and compares them to the patterns of Native English-speaking (NES) students learning L2 Spanish. More specifically, this study analyses the transfer of pragmatic knowledge in request and apology situations from the L2 to the L3 in which the L2 is Hindi, the national language of India, and the L3 is Spanish. Request and apology speech acts were selected for study due to their common occurrence in everyday human interaction and are used to compare learners' acquisition and transfer of pragmatic knowledge. The various speech acts used in any one situation demonstrate that speaker's intentions and desires. They also demonstrate how a speaker's particular cultural background influences the way a speech act like a request or an apology is formed, because the acts are dictated by cultural norms. For example, when asking a friend for a glass of water, the native Spanish speakers (NSS) phrased the request as: *¿Me das un vaso de agua, por favor? Es que tengo un sed...*<sup>1</sup> 'Will you give me a glass of water please? It's that I am so thirsty...' whereas the native Hindi speakers (NHS) phrased the request as: *ek glass paani de* 'Give me a glass of water'. Thus we can see here that NSS are more polite when forming their request and also provide an explanation about why they need a glass of water. On the other hand, NHS are much more informal when forming their request and do not follow their request with the use of 'please', 'thank you' or an explanation.<sup>2</sup>

This influence can be demonstrated by adult L2 learners who seem to have attained an advanced level of fluency in the L2 but often find it difficult to interact with native speakers of that language because they are not familiar with the sociocultural rules governing that language. An example of this is provided above where native speakers of two different languages (Spanish

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<sup>1</sup> Participants' responses to the situations have been listed as provided without any changes (grammatical or otherwise) being made to them.

<sup>2</sup> No pleading intonation is used by the NHSs to soften the request or make up for the lack of use of 'please' or 'thank you'.

and Hindi) use different politeness norms to ask for a glass of water. When NHS learning Spanish use this same politeness norm to ask for a glass of water in Spanish, they are considered impolite, even though they might frame the sentence correctly from a grammatical standpoint. Native Hindi speakers whose L2 is English are often confronted with a similar problem when they interact with English speakers from another country like England or the U.S., and often sport a world image of being “obsequious” (Thomas 2006: 30) because the Hindi speakers often apply the pragmatic knowledge from their L1 to situations that require them to use their L2 English.

Pragmatics is defined as the study of language use and involves a student’s system of beliefs as well as language knowledge and perception. Pragmatics within the paradigm of L2 and L3 acquisition is a much studied area of linguistics in recent years although for a long time teachers and researchers of language acquisition neglected to study and/or teach the pragmatic knowledge that accompanied the target language and culture. This practice led to cross-cultural misunderstandings and miscommunication, or what Thomas (2006: 22) calls “pragmatic failure.” She defines “pragmatic failure” as “an area of cross-cultural communication breakdown” and suggests that pragmatics be taught in classrooms to heighten students’ metapragmatic awareness and to help them express their intentions in a manner that may be understood clearly by the cultural group that they wish to address.

From the above discussion we can see that pragmatics is an area of language study that must be adequately addressed both inside and outside the classroom to provide language learners with a more comprehensive understanding of their target language. By investigating the various speech acts used by learners in L3 situations requiring apologies and requests, this study attempts

to understand the influence of the learners' L1 and L2 on their L3 pragmatic knowledge and resultant use of the target L3.

## **2. Outline of the report**

The first part of this report provides an introduction to the field of multilingual research and why it is an important component in current linguistic studies. Section Two provides an outline of the report followed by Section Three, where a brief outline of some of the main ideas in this field of study is presented. Previous research conducted on transfer of pragmatic knowledge is also presented in Section Three. Section Four discusses heritage language learners, characteristics of their language proficiency and the challenges faced by educators and researchers when working with this group of language learners. This section is followed by an explanation of speech acts in general and apology and request speech acts in particular in Section Five. The various head speech acts and subacts that make up apologies and requests are presented here.

Pragmatic differences between Hindi, and Spanish, especially within the realm of request and apology situations, are presented in Section Six, to provide the reader with an idea of the socio-cultural differences that exist between the two languages and to demonstrate how these differences lead to the use of varied speech acts by speakers of both languages to accomplish similar goals. The methodology and procedure used to conduct the study and collect the data are explained in Section Seven. The results of the study are discussed in Section Eight. The differences found between NES data and HHS data are analyzed and compared to the responses of the NHS and NSS to demonstrate the possibility of transfer of pragmatic knowledge from the participants' L1 and L2 to their L3.

Finally, the conclusion and implications of the study are presented in Section Nine. Ideas for further research and the limitations of the current study are also presented in this section.

### **3. Previous Research on Transfer**

One of the big effects of globalization and an international economy has been a growing number of trilingual and multilingual speakers in almost every country around the globe. This phenomenon has led to an increase in the number of multilingual learners in language classrooms and has considerably changed the dynamics of a language classroom due to the associated complexity of trilingualism and its implications and differences from L2 acquisition. As Clyne (1997: 113) pointed out, “the additional language complicates the operations of the (learning) processes” and must be addressed in our teaching practices. In spite of this problem, the field of interlanguage transfer from an L2 to an L3 is a relatively unexplored field in comparison to the amount of research that has been done comparing L1 influence on the acquisition of an L2. Past approaches to SLA, like the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Lado 1957) and Error Analysis (Corder 1967) predict language transfer between L1 and L2, but do not address language transfer between L1 or L2 and L3. This lack of information about multiple language acquisition, the differences between L2 acquisition (SLA) and L3 acquisition (TLA), and the implications of this research for SLA and TLA theories are the focus of this study.

Another area that has not been fully explored is the field of interlanguage transfer of pragmatic knowledge. While studies do show the existence of interlanguage transfer in the fields of syntax (Gass 1980; O’Grady, Lee and Choo 2001), phonology, morphology or lexicon (Baumgartner-Cohen and Selinker 1995; Schmidt and Frota 1986; Dewaele 1998; Ringbom 1987; and Williams and Hammarberg 1988) there have been very few studies that analyze interlanguage transfer at the pragmatic level, as noted by Hammarberg (2001). In fact, Kellerman’s (1983) work on language transfer examines only linguistic categories like syntax, phonology and, lexicon, but excludes pragmatics.

Even though the Hindi and Spanish languages might be typologically distant, it can be hypothesized that L1 Hindi could affect the participants' study and resultant production of L2 or L3 Spanish. It is already established that cross-linguistic transfer can take place not only between a learner's L1 and the target language but, in the case of multilingualism, possibly from all the previous languages known to the learner depending on the context (Cenoz 2003). Therefore, it may be that U.S. heritage Hindi speakers who grew up speaking mainly English and are learning Spanish would transfer pragmatic knowledge from their L1 (English) or L2 (Hindi) to their L3 (Spanish) if they encountered a gap in their pragmatic knowledge when using their L3 (Spanish), and especially would use L2 Hindi if their L1 (English) could not help them fill this gap.

As indicated before, pragmatics is a field often overlooked in language acquisition study, although it is rapidly gaining attention as SLA students and teachers alike realize how important the teaching of socio-cultural rules is to language teaching and learning. Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990) studied pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2 in refusal situations among groups of native Japanese and English speakers. Their results show evidence of pragmatic transfer in that the order of semantic formulas used by L2 learners in both their native language and their second language was similar.

Olshtain (1983) also studied the phenomenon of transfer of pragmatic knowledge between L1 and L2 in apology situations. Two groups of students learning Hebrew as an L2, including native speakers of English and native speakers of Russian, were provided with eight situations requiring apologies. Their responses were then compared to those of Israeli speakers of Hebrew to establish any deviations from accepted responses. These deviations were then traced back largely to transfer from the learners' L1s. The study demonstrated that while individual situations played a role in a learner's choice of strategies in making an apology, language

transfer also guided the choices to a large extent. The previously known languages (in this case, the learners' L1s English and Russian) affected learners' production of Hebrew in situations requiring apologies, indicating interlanguage transfer of pragmatic knowledge.

Another investigation that greatly influenced this report is the study of L2 influence on L3 in the field of pragmatics by Koike and Flanzer (2004). They analyzed several speech act situations in Portuguese requiring requests and apologies. Thirty Portuguese L3 learners in their first year of study participated in the research. Ten were bilingual English-Spanish heritage speakers (NSH) and 20 learners were native English speakers who were also fluent in Spanish (NES). Their results show that the two groups of learners responded differently to the same situations, based on their L1 and L2 knowledge, thus suggesting the presence of interlanguage pragmatic transfer from an L2 to an L3. This study also showed that there was a greater transfer of knowledge between languages that were typologically similar, supporting Kellerman's (1983) claim that typological similarity between languages is a major factor affecting the amount of transfer from L2 to L3.

Some current research on interlanguage transfer and third language acquisition includes works by Koike and Palmiere (2007), Safont Jordà (2005) and Wannaruk (2008). Koike and Palmiere's (2007) study analyzes transfer of L1 English and L2 Spanish pragmatic expression in oral and written modalities by Spanish-speaking L3 Portuguese learners. While the results demonstrate very few instances of clear transfer between learners' L1 or L2 to L3 Portuguese, they do demonstrate transfer to be a modality-sensitive and very complex phenomenon.

Wannaruk's (2008) study investigates similarities and differences between refusals in L2 American English and L1 Thai and incidences of *pragmatic transfer* by Thai-speaking EFL learners when making refusals. The results demonstrate that pragmatic transfer did exist in the

choice and context of refusal strategies of the Thai EFL learners when producing English. Her study also indicated that language proficiency was an important factor in the instances of pragmatic transfer demonstrated by the Thai speakers.

Safont Jordà (2005) studied multilingualism in the context of classroom instruction, proficiency levels of students and the role of bilingualism on the production and use of learner's third or fourth languages. The study took place in Spain and the learners were bilingual speakers of Catalan and Castilian Spanish whose L3 was English. They were all enrolled at the Jaume I University in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course, which was required for them to graduate.

The participants were administered a pre-test and a post-test to determine the effects of instruction on their pragmatic knowledge. The main test that required learners to use requests consisted of an open role-play, an open discourse-completion test and a discourse-evaluation test. The situations provided to the learners varied in terms of language dominance and degree of imposition in making the request to avoid having the learners use formulaic responses that they might have learned in class or elsewhere. For example:

Situation 3: You have just arrived at Heathrow Airport and you do not know where to get a bus to Victoria railway station. You decide to go to the information desk. What would you say?

Situation 9: Your best friend has moved to another town. You phone his/her mother's house because you want to know your friend's new phone number. What would you say?

Data were analyzed by considering the amount and type of strategies employed by the participants. The results demonstrated that instruction did have a positive effect (p. 126) on learners' pragmatic production. Results also demonstrated a correlation between a learner's proficiency level in the L3 and the use of appropriate pragmatic linguistic tools. More importantly for this study, the bilingual students displayed an advantage over the monolingual students in terms of interactional competence. The bilingual students also displayed a greater awareness toward the use of appropriate pragmatic behavior. Specifically, the results of the investigation seem to indicate that the bilingual students outperformed the monolingual learners in these functions: (1) recognizing pragmatic failure; (2) providing suggestions for improvement; and (3) justifying their evaluative comments.

The possible reasons for this behavior provided by Safont-Jordá include a higher degree of pragmatic awareness in bilingual students as well as a larger amount of pragmatic knowledge that they have available at their disposal because they can transfer this knowledge from both of their previously known languages. Thus, this study indirectly displays transfer of pragmatic and linguistic knowledge from learners' L1 as well as L2 to their L3.

Following the above-mentioned studies, this investigation attempts to address similar issues in interlanguage transfer and the effects, if any, of previously known languages on L3 acquisition. However, this investigation studies the phenomenon of transfer by heritage speakers of Hindi, which adds a different perspective because heritage speakers of a language have different characteristics from other monolingual or bilingual learners, as discussed in Section 1. In addition, this paper is one of the first of its kind to compare the influence of an L2 like Hindi to a western L3 like Spanish and could help in a better understanding of western and non-western cultures in relation to each other. It is proposed in this report that the knowledge that learners

acquire from an L2 might affect their acquisition of an L3. Consequently, the acquisition and resultant production of L3 Spanish speech acts by heritage speakers of L1 or L2 Hindi is expected to differ from the acquisition and production of Spanish by Native English Speakers (NES) whose L1 is English. The differences between Hindi and Spanish speakers and the typological distance perceived by the learners to exist between the Spanish and Hindi languages will also affect the Spanish pragmatic knowledge displayed by the heritage speakers of Hindi.

Given the previous literature reviewed here, this study proposes to examine the following research questions:

1. Does the previously learned pragmatic knowledge of L1 English or L2 Hindi affect the production of the L3 Spanish? If so, in what way?
2. Does the perceived typological distance between L2 Hindi and L3 Spanish affect the transfer of pragmatic knowledge ? If so, how does it affect the transfer?

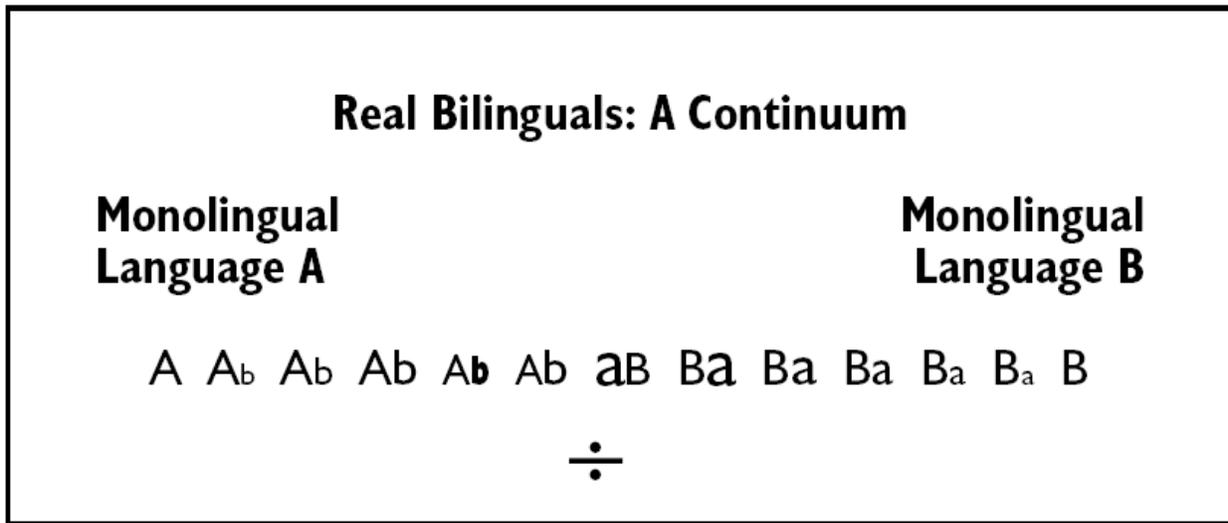
My hypotheses are:

1. Pragmatic knowledge does transfer from learners' L1 or L2 to their L3 when similarities are perceived by the learners between their L1 or L2 and their L3.
2. The perceived typological distance between the two languages is a factor affecting the level of transfer that occurs, as Kellerman (1983) claims.

#### **4. Heritage Language Learners**

One of the important innovative characteristics of this study is that it focuses on U.S. heritage language learners (HLL) and investigates how their L1 English and L2 Hindi affect their study and production of L3 Spanish. Valdés (2001: 2) defines an HLL as a “language student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English.” These learners are seen as different from other bilingual language learners because they demonstrate “developed functional proficiencies in the heritage language” even though they might not exhibit native like fluency in that language. The bilingual language skills of this group are not homogenous and fall along a continuum that ranges from learners who are equally proficient and native-like in both languages they speak to those who are almost monolingual because they barely utilize their heritage language. This range is presented in Figure 1. A represents a learner’s L1 and B represents a learner’s L2. The letters are presented in different sizes to represent a learner’s varied proficiency in both languages. This range gives us an idea of how varied HLLs’ language skills can be.

Figure 1: Bilingual Continuum (Valdés 2001: 5)



This proficiency in HLL language can sometimes vary over the course of their lives, especially if they are part of an immigrant family. Depending on their age at the time of immigration, they might completely reject the new language (adults, first generation of immigrants) or they might forsake their heritage language and adopt the language and culture of their new home (children, second- or third-generation immigrants). As Valdés (2001) points out, this heterogeneity brings with it various challenges when it comes to L2 education for these students. For example, what variety of language should be taught, how can the varying proficiencies of HLLs be accommodated, and how can they provide instruction that capitalizes on personal connections to the heritage language?

The spoken language of these learners may often contain a number of features typical of casual and informal registers of the language that are inappropriate in the classroom, or they may speak a stigmatized variety of the heritage language that is not accepted in academic settings. In many cases, HLLs are orally proficient in their L1 but are unable to read or write it. HLL speech might also be characterized by a lower range of repertoires as the heritage language may be used

in very limited contexts to achieve very specific social goals. Not only does this practice lead to HLL speakers having limited proficiency in the language, but over the years it causes the language to change and “deteriorate” as this limited repertoire is passed on from generation to generation, thus causing the language to become “mutilated” (Valdés 2001: 10) and eventually preventing the speakers of that language from ever becoming equally proficient in their heritage language and their adopted language.

The heritage Hindi speakers (HHS) participating in this study might have possibly undergone a similar phenomenon and language loss, causing them to be only partially proficient in their L2 Hindi. This factor might have affected the results of the study as compared to studies that focus on monolingual and bilingual learners of a foreign language.

## 5. Speech Acts

A *speech act* is a concept originated by Austin (1962) and developed by Searle (1969) who defines it as an utterance that serves a function in communication, or as “the basic or minimal token of communication” (Searle, 1969: 16). The action that sentences “perform” (Searle 1969) when they are uttered is embodied in a speech act. Speech acts might be realized by just one word like *Sorry!* which performs the function of apologizing, or it might be phrased in longer utterances like *I am so sorry I broke your T.V.!* In these utterances, the act is performed *in* saying something, and is separate from the act *of* saying something. As is apparent, speech acts used by a speaker are situation-specific and must be realized appropriately in order not to violate the social norms governing that particular encounter.

Besides this condition, they must also be culturally appropriate to perform the action they are intended to perform successfully so as to not cause misunderstandings between the people involved or, worse, cause a communication breakdown. For example, in the U.S., when a person performs an action that deviates from social norms and causes offense to another person, the offender might apologize to the offended person and maybe offer to pay for the damages, which would be considered acceptable. In India among Hindi speakers, however, the apology must include an explanation of why the offense was caused in the first place. Without the explanation, the apology is considered incomplete and, in many cases, unacceptable. Due to this difference, Americans might find Indians too talkative and tiresome as they go about explaining why the offense occurred while Indians might find the Americans rude for not providing an explanation with their apology. These social norms thus regulate the use and acceptance of speech acts in different situations, making them an ideal subject of study for SLA researchers interested in

transfer and contrastive analysis because they can vary so much from language to language, depending on that culture's ideas of saving face, cultural appropriateness, etc.

The idea of “face-saving” was first introduced into the politeness paradigm by Goffman (1967) and was elaborated on by Brown and Levinson (1987: 13) who explain the concept of ‘face’ as an abstract notion that “consists of two specific kinds of desires (face wants) attributed by interactants to one another: the desire to be unimpeded in one’s actions (negative face), and the desire to be approved of (positive face).” They state that when interacting with one another, people generally co-operate with each other in order to maintain face. However, there are some acts that are intrinsically face-threatening (FTAs); e.g., requests or apologies. When faced with FTAs, people adopt various speech strategies to minimize or eliminate such threats; for example, by softening a request or giving a warning, or by expressing them indirectly. In such situations speakers analyze the level of threat involved, considering factors such as the degree of power that interlocutors have over each other, the social distance between them, and the imposition existing in a given speech act, before deciding on an appropriate strategy.

### **5.1 The Apology Speech Act Set**

This section centers on the act of apologizing, one of the two speech acts investigated in this study. I chose to study apologies and requests because of their frequency of occurrence in normal conversation as well as for their universal appearance in every language and culture. In addition, apologies and requests alike reflect a unique part of the culture and language of the speaker and hearer and thus are excellent ground for the study of pragmatics.

An apology is usually used when some social norm has been violated by another person’s actions or words. The apology is then issued by the apologizer to make amends with the offended person. Each apology is considered to have at least two parts: (1) regret felt by the

offender for having done or said something offensive (Searle 1979); and (2) a sense of responsibility for the offense on the part of the apologizer (Fraser 1980). Thus, the sub-acts of an apology speech act must contain an expression of regret and an acknowledgement of responsibility that can be expressed in a number of ways. Olshtain (1983: 235) classifies them into the following semantic formulas:

- (a) Expression of apology: when the speaker uses a “word, expression or sentence that contains a performative verb such as apologize, forgive, excuse or be sorry” (Olshtain 1983: 235), which can vary from an expression like *I apologize* to an expression like *I’m sorry* and can be intensified by adding interjections like *I am terribly sorry*. As Olshtain (1983) notes, these expressions are based on sociocultural rules specific to each situation and can vary tremendously between cultures.
- (b) Explanation or account: what caused the offensive action is often provided by the apologizer in an effort to gain the offended person’s trust and confidence and to ameliorate the offense. In many cases, the explanation is provided in place of an apology or is accepted instead of an apology depending on the culture and language of the people involved (e.g., *There was such a traffic jam on the interstate! Sorry I am late*).
- (c) Acknowledgement of responsibility: an acknowledgement of responsibility, either direct or indirect, may also be a part of the apology. The acknowledgement varies in intensity where, in some cases, the offender overtly accepts all the blame for the offense (*It’s my fault*) or in other cases expresses remorse and “lack of intent” by using a phrase such as *I didn’t mean to do it*. Finally, the offender could also deny any responsibility for the offense or pass on the responsibility to a third party (e.g., *I was late because my girlfriend was not dressed on time*).

(d) Offer of repair: is often made by the apologizer, especially when material damage is incurred by the offended party (e.g., *I am sorry I broke your mug, I will buy you a new one*).

(e) Promise of forbearance: may be implied to ensure the offended person that the apologizer will try not to commit the offense again (e.g., *I am sorry I was late, it won't happen again*).

While all or some of these sub-acts can be used by speakers across the globe, the speakers' cultural norms will dictate which ones are used more often and in which situations. For example, for speakers of Hindi it is usually culturally acceptable to offer only an explanation or account of whatever caused the offense without saying an actual apology. Due to this practice, Indians are often considered rude or unapologetic when interacting with English speakers from foreign countries because they use this pragmatic strategy of apologizing by providing an explanation of events whereas other English speakers would usually begin the apology with an expression of apology and then possibly provide an explanation (e.g., *I am so sorry I am late, there was a long line at the bank today*). Indians appear to transfer pragmatic knowledge from their L1 Hindi to their L2 or L3 English, and deviate from the accepted norm when apologizing in English, following an L1 sociocultural norm.

## **5.2 The Request Speech Act**

Another speech act considered in this study is the request speech act. A request is defined as the act of asking for something to be given or done, especially as a favor or courtesy or a solicitation or petition. Like apologies, requests can also be placed on a continuum or scale depending on their directness. They range from very explicit (e.g., *Pick up that gum wrapper,*

*please!*) to indirect or implicit (e.g., *It's so cold in here!*). Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984: 201) establish three basic levels of directness in which requests can vary:

- (a) Most direct or explicit level: This type of request is characterized by the use of imperatives, performatives (Austin 1962) and/or hedged performatives (Fraser 1965) (e.g., *Finish your homework before dinner!*).
- (b) Conventionally indirect level: These requests are characterized by “procedures that realize the act by reference to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance, as conventionalized in a given language” (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984: 201) (e.g., *Could you pass the salt, please?*).
- (c) Non-conventional indirect level: Requests at this level include open-ended questions or remarks, hints, and implied requests that rely on contextual clues. (e.g., *Gosh, it's cold in here!*).

Requests of these different levels of directness are culturally- and linguistically-specific and vary from one language to another based on that culture's pragmatic norms. Any differences in norms can often lead to misunderstandings and communication failure when used between speakers of different native languages. For example, when native Hindi speakers answer the telephone and are asked *Is Maria home?* they do not take the query as a request to put Maria on the phone, but rather as a factual question that they must answer with details about Maria's physical whereabouts. Instead of the expected act of putting Maria on the phone, this kind of an answer leads non-Hindi speakers to perceive Hindi speakers as rude or strange and causes them to be impatient with Hindi speakers for not following an expected routine when making such an indirect request.

In expressing these different levels of requests, a common trait is that requestors often seek a way to minimize the imposition they make on the hearer. This mitigation arises because requests impose on the freedom of action of the hearer and are considered to be FTAs (Brown and Levinson 1978). Therefore, depending on the situation and the culture involved, requests can take many shapes and forms and be manipulated to suit the speakers' and hearers' cultural norms. These modifications can be made in various ways: using explicit or implicit performatives; making suggestions or giving hints; changing the point of view or roles of the requestor and the person carrying out the request; adding softeners or intensifiers to mask the request, etc. A more detailed list of these sub-acts and strategies as categorized by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984: 203-205) is provided in Tables 1-5.

(a) The request perspective: This strategy involves avoiding naming the addressee as the “principal performer” (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984: 203) of the request and helps the requestors save face by not being direct or by including themselves in the act. (e.g., *Should we move to the patio then?*). This type of saving of face is further categorized as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Categories of the request perspective. (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984: 203-205)

<b>Type:</b>	<b>Example:</b>
Hearer-oriented: the hearer is the focus of the act.	<i>Can <b>you</b> put the trash out please?</i>
Speaker-oriented: the speaker is the focus of the act.	<i>Could <b>I</b> have the salt please?</i>
Speaker- and Hearer-oriented: both the speaker and the hearer are jointly the focus of the act.	<i>So should <b>we</b> do the laundry?</i>
Impersonal: neutral agents or passivization are used to avoid mentioning any particular person.	<i>It's probably a good idea to <b>get that mess cleaned up</b> or <b>Who could have made such a mess?</b></i>

(b) Syntactic downgraders: Another strategy employed by request makers is to use syntactic downgraders to mitigate their request. This mitigation is achieved by making syntactic modifications to their request and includes four categories, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Categories of syntactic downgraders. (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984: 203-205)

<b>Type:</b>	<b>Example:</b>
Interrogative: the request is phrased like a question to make it sound like less of a mandate and to soften its impact.	<i>Could you pass me the salt please?</i>
Negation: might signal the speaker's pessimism with regard to the outcome of the request, which is indicated by offering the hearer an option to sidestep the request.	<i>Maybe you <b>wouldn't</b> mind loaning me your notes?</i>
Past tense: could serve as a distancing element to make neither the speaker nor the hearer appear too invested in the request, thereby making it easier for the hearers to refuse to act upon the request if they so wished.	<i>I <b>wanted to ask</b> if you could lend me your car.</i>
Embedded "if" clause: could serve as a hedging device by giving the hearers the option not to act upon the request if they so desired.	<i>It would be better <b>if we finished</b> the job right away.</i>

(c) Other downgraders: Besides the above-mentioned syntactic downgraders, other kinds of downgraders may also be used to soften the request, make the addressee more involved in the decision of executing the act or make the request appear less like a command. These include those categories in Table 3.

Table 3: Categories within other downgraders. (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984: 203-205)

<b>Type:</b>	<b>Example:</b>
Consultative devices: these devices can become formulaic in their usage and are used to involve the hearers in the request as well as ask for their cooperation in the execution of the request.	<i>Do you think we could mow the lawn today?</i>
Understaters: these are used to minimize parts of the proposition and make it appear less demanding.	<i>Could you move <b>a little bit</b> to the left?</i>
Hedges: the speaker uses this device to avoid making a specific request in terms of what needs to be done, when it needs to be done or how it needs to be done, which gives the appearance that the hearer is in fact in control of the request.	<i>Could you <b>do something</b> about the peeling paint?</i>
Downtoner: these devices signal to the hearer the speaker's acceptance of non-compliance if the requested act is not performed.	<i><b>Maybe</b> we could wash the car this weekend?</i>

All of the strategies mentioned above are used by requestors to mitigate the effect of their request and make the act of requesting less face-threatening for themselves and the person acting upon the request.

(d) Intensifiers: In many cases, speakers wish to increase the force of their request or intensify the request and, in such cases, they use intensifiers to achieve their desired result. They may use intensifiers to express their opinion clearly about something or just

to exaggerate reality and get their point across to the person complying with the request, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Categories of intensifiers. (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984: 203-205)

<b>Type:</b>	<b>Example:</b>
Intensifier: speakers use this type to over-represent reality and strengthen their request.	<i>Stop that, <b>It's gross!</b></i>
Expletive: this element indicates the speaker's negative emotional attitude about a particular situation and exerts more force into the request.	<i>Clean up your <b>bloody stinking</b> room!</i>

Finally, besides all of the strategies presented in Tables 1-4, speakers may also modify the context of the request instead of directly modifying the request itself to achieve results similar to those discussed, such as by softening the request or intensifying it, as seen in Table 5. These modifications are not part of the “head speech-act” and do not modify the request itself, but rather help to change the tone and mood of the request.

Table 5: Elements that modify context of the request. (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984: 203-205)

<b>Type:</b>	<b>Example:</b>
Checking on availability: this strategy helps the speaker check if the precondition necessary for compliance of the request holds true.	<i>Are you going to Anna's party tonight? If so, can I ride with you?</i>
Getting a precommitment: the speaker uses this element in an attempt to obtain a precommitment before stating the actual request.	<i>Could you do me a favor? Could you pick up my laundry from the cleaners tomorrow?</i>
Grounder: this utterance is used by speakers to delineate the context and provide a reason or an explanation before making the request.	<i>Marta, I missed class last week, may I borrow your notes?</i>
Sweetener: the speaker attempts to lower the imposition involved by expressing appreciation about the hearers and their ability to comply with the request.	<i>I love your skirt!! May I borrow it for Fran's party?</i>
Disarmer: speakers indicate the anticipation of a possible refusal by indicating their awareness of a potential offense.	<i>Excuse me, this may sound too forward, but can I ride with you to Alan's party?</i>
Cost minimizer: the speaker uses this device to indicate to the hearer the consideration of the 'cost' involved to the hearer in the compliance of the request.	<i>Hi there, if you're going my way, may I ride with you? I missed the bus.</i>

Thus requests, like apologies, can take many different forms depending not only on the situation and the relationship of the persons involved, but also on their language and culture and the constraints of requesting practices in that language.

## **6. Politeness Across Cultures**

This section discusses politeness and its various forms in the Spanish and Hindi languages and cultures. Common politeness patterns as they are expected and tolerated by each culture in different situations are presented here. These patterns are later used as a basis to compare and contrast the data collected by the researcher during the course of this research to draw conclusions about the existence, nature and source of transfer of pragmatic knowledge by multilingual speakers of all of these three languages.

Previous research about politeness claims that politeness is “seen as arising from an awareness of one’s social obligations to the other members of the group to which one owes primary allegiance” (Nwoye 1992: 312) and is therefore a culture-specific phenomenon. Wolfson (1989) states that in situations where apologies or requests are used, exchanges are performed according to the rules of speaking and social norms of that speech community. Thus different cultural patterns should be apparent in the use of request and apology strategies by people from different cultural backgrounds.

According to Fraser (1990), a lack of consistency exists among researchers on what politeness is and how it may be accounted for because it is culture-specific and not universal, as argued by Brown and Levinson (1987: 13, 61). Fraser (1990: 220) also claims that “The social norm view of politeness assumes that each society has a particular set of social norms consisting of more or less explicit rules that prescribe a certain behavior, a state of affairs, or a way of thinking in a context.” Impoliteness or rudeness, on the other hand, is perceived when one’s actions are contrary to the norms of that particular society. This observation leads us to conclude that linguistically polite behavior in one community may not necessarily be regarded as polite in another community. Furthermore, communities may differ in their preferences of politeness

manifestation; i.e., some may show a preference for negative politeness while others may prefer positive politeness.

Wolfson (1989: 14) also discusses “sociolinguistic rules” or “rules of speaking,” which she defines as “patterns and conventions of language behavior.” These rules of speaking are part of the communicative competence that differentiates members of one speech community from those of another. Such rules are “culture-specific” and “unconsciously held,” which means that although native speakers are perfectly competent in the uses and interpretation of their rules, they are not aware of “the patterned nature of their own behavior” (Wolfson 1989: 37).

### **6.1 Politeness in the Hindi-speaking Culture**

In general, it has been observed that in “non-Western cultures, the primary interactional focus is not upon individualism but upon group identity” (Bharuthram 2003) and that social context plays a much larger role in politeness expressions than does the face of the individual (Matsumoto 1988; Ide 1989). Ide (1989) also proposes the idea of “discernment” and explains that certain cultures place more emphasis on discerning appropriate behavior in a situation and acting accordingly rather than using interactional strategies to achieve specific objectives such as pleasing or displeasing others.

This idea is reinforced by Mehrotra (1995), who studied politeness patterns in Indian English and how they were affected by Indian culture (as opposed to Western culture). Thirty Indian students were asked to illustrate all the possible ways they would use to ask a person for a pen and they collectively came up with 75 different ways, 52 of which were unique and not repeated by others. Thus, we can see that politeness in Hindi is less formulaic and more adaptable to the current situation at hand, which leads to the use of a greater number and larger variety of strategies when apologizing or making requests.

In her study on politeness in the Hindi-speaking community of Indians living in South Africa, Bharuthram (2003: 1531) notes that, from a religious and cultural perspective, “politeness was fundamental to human relationships” to this group, who believed that “the more one is willing to serve and share with humanity, the more blessings he/she will receive.” For this reason, Indians think it is important not only to be polite, but also to be perceived as polite by the rest of the community so that their politeness is never called into question. It is important for them to ensure that their apology is not only heard but also accepted by the person to whom they are apologizing. Bharuthram (2003: 1532) explains this behavior as a need to maintain “one’s good community or group image” because much emphasis is placed on a person’s family name or last name. It is a commodity shared by the whole family; thus any given individual’s actions would therefore affect the entire family’s social status and “engaging in wrongdoings would tarnish the family name” (p. 1532). Some examples of apologies in Hindi are listed in Table 6.

Table 6: Examples of apologies in Hindi

Apology strategy	Example
Request forgiveness for the error	<i>Mujhe maaf kardo</i> ‘forgive me’
Accept blame	<i>Mujhse galti ho gayi</i> ‘I made a mistake’
Promise to not let it happen again	<i>Agli baar nahin hoga, such</i> ‘it won’t happen again, really’
Express regret	<i>Mujhe bahut bura lag raha hai. Yeh maine kya kiya?</i> ‘I feel really bad. What did I do?’
Express lack of intention	<i>Maine jaan bujh kar nahin kiya</i> ‘I didn’t do it intentionally’
Other repair	<i>Ab bhul ja... phir nahin hoga</i> ‘now forget it... it won’t happen again’

In contrast, however, speech acts like ‘sorry’ are seldom used when apologizing in either formal or informal situations, indicating that while politeness is considered to be a very important trait in a person, admission of an error is considered a weakness and causes the apologizer to lose face in such situations. On the other hand, requests are approached differently in Indian culture because complying with a request or granting a favor are seen as honors bestowed upon the doer; therefore requests are not regarded as impositions (Bharuthram 2003).

Bharuthram (2003) explains that this perception of requests emerges from the idea of ‘face’ as introduced by Brown and Levinson (1987). In Indian culture, the concept of ‘face’ is viewed and perceived very differently than in western cultures. According to Brown and

Levinson (1987), private face in western cultures holds greater importance than the collective face of the community, and therefore, an “individual places his/her public self image above those of others” (Bharuthram 2003: 1533). However, in Indian culture, “collective image of the group overrides that of the individual” (Bharuthram 2003: 1533) so very few acts are seen as impositions. This norm is present in some non-western cultures like the Zulu culture (Kadt 1998) where asking for favors is not considered an imposition and does not indebt the person asking for the favor.

A linguistic representation of the social hierarchy found in Indian culture is seen in the use of the formal register *aap* ‘you’ that is consistently used by Indians when addressing strangers, adults and respected people in the community, regardless of age. Children are never supposed to talk back to adults and must always use *aap* ‘you’ when addressing older or more qualified people. These norms are established for life, such that children are not permitted to talk back to their parents and likewise their parents are not permitted to talk back to their own parents, whatever position or status they might achieve outside of the house.

Mehrotra (1995: 99) lists some differentiating characteristics of Indian English from British and American Englishes, which he claims are influenced by Indian culture and various Indian languages like Hindi. Some of these are “deviant pronominal use, special polite phraseology and verbalization of gratitude, deliberate social distancing, and lack of concision and directness.” All of these traits are apparent in requests and apologies made by Indians in Hindi and reflect the norms of Indian society. Some examples of requests in Hindi are found in Table 7.

Table 7: Examples of requests in Hindi

Request strategy	Example
Direct request	<i>Ek gilās paani milega?</i> ‘may I have a glass of water?’
Indirect request	<i>Bahut pyaas lagi hai...</i> ‘I am so thirsty’
Use of understaters	<i>Zara meri madat karna toh</i> ‘just help me a little bit, won’t you?’
Use of sweetener	<i>Aap kitne nek insaan hain, meri madat kar rahe hain</i> ‘you are such a nice person to be helping me’
Use of hedges	<i>Agar aap kuch kar sakte hain toh acha hai</i> ‘it would be nice if you could do something about it’
Use of imperative	<i>Chal, paani la!</i> ‘go get me water!’

An assumption of this study is that the NHSs responses to the 6 situations requiring apologies and requests can be used as baseline data and compared to the responses of the HHS in the study to establish similarities and differences in their responses and perhaps trace them to the transfer of pragmatic knowledge between languages.

## 6.2 Politeness in the Hispanic Culture

Based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of face in western cultures, it can be said that Spanish is a positive politeness language. This description means that politeness strategies preferred by Spanish speakers appeal to the positive face of a person and convey the speaker's need for approval. Many instances of positive politeness are found in Spanish language; e.g., the use of discourse markers and attention-getters like *oye* 'listen' and *mira* 'look', which are used by NSSs to mitigate the direct effects of a request. Offering reasons or explanations during requests are also an example of positive politeness because they express a need and imply to the persons granting the request that they can help the requestor (Félix-Brasdefer 2005).

Expressions of positive politeness are also realized by means of agreement, gratitude, and empathy to end an interaction politely. Félix-Brasdefer's (2005) study on requests and apologies in Mexican Spanish demonstrated that expressions of positive politeness like the ones discussed above were the third most frequently used modifiers used by NSSs to soften their apologies and requests. Examples of positive politeness are:

(1) *Oye, ¿me puedes prestar tu falda para la fiesta?*

'Listen, could you lend me your skirt for the party?'

(2) *Se lo agradecería muchísimo, sí de veras, se lo agradezco mucho.*

'I would really appreciate it, yes really, I would appreciate it a lot'

(3) *¿Me podría pasar el agua? Tengo una sed...*

'Could you pass me the water? I am so thirsty...'

Data from studies conducted by Koike and Flanzer (2004) and Hobbs (1990) provide us with information on Spanish and Portuguese speech patterns in request and apology situation. Hobbs' (1990) study focused on pragmatics in request and apology situations in Mexican

Spanish. Sixty-eight Native Spanish Speakers (NSS) were asked to respond to situations that required the speakers to make requests. The situations ranged from considerably face-threatening (Situation 1: asking a guest to move to another chair) to not very face-threatening (Situation 2: asking for a glass of water). The results showed that 32% of the respondents used imperatives or commands when making a more formal request and 66% used commands when making an informal request. Other responses by NSSs in Hobbs (1990) study to these situations are listed in Table 8.

Table 8: Strategies used by NSSs when making requests (Hobbs 1990)

	Situation 1: Ask someone to move to a different chair	Situation 2: Ask for a glass of water
Imperatives	32%	66%
Requests	16%	31%
No answer	15%	
Diversions	7%	
Hints	10%	2%
Attention-getters	13%	
Vocatives	8%	
Terms of endearment	3%	1%

Very often, a softener such as *¿Sería tan amable de moverse?* ‘Would you be so kind to move to another chair?’ was also used by NSSs to soften the request. Besides these strategies, NSSs also used *por favor* ‘please’ 27% of the time. Attention-getters like *oye* ‘hey’ (in 13% of

all requests), vocatives like *oye, Juan* ‘hey John’ (8%), and terms of endearment or nicknames *Juanito cariño* ‘John darling’ (3%) were also used by NSSs to make requests (Hobbs 1990).

Since there are no studies on Hindi apologies and requests, a comparison between Hindi and Spanish politeness norms cannot be made at this point. However, the data elicited by this study from NSSs are used in later sections as baseline data for the Hindi language and will demonstrate the differences between Hindi and Spanish politeness and culture. Since I am a fluent speaker of Hindi and Spanish, these two languages were chosen for comparison in this study.

Let us now discuss apology situations as they are handled by NSS. Overfield (1997) studies the responses of 17 NSSs to different apology situations like insulting somebody, forgetting a meeting, forgetting dinner with a friend, bumping into a shopper at the grocery store and forgetting your father’s birthday. She categorized their responses into 4 major categories according to the strategies used by the respondents:

- (a) An explicit apology strategy: e.g., I apologize; please forgive me
- (b) An explanation or an account: e.g., the traffic was horrible
- (c) An acknowledgement of responsibility: e.g., that was so stupid of me
- (d) A promise of forbearance: e.g., I promise it won’t happen again

Her analysis demonstrated that the most highly used strategy among this group was to request forgiveness for the error (61% of NSSs). Twenty-two percent of the NSSs provided an explanation or an account of why the error occurred and 22% promised to not let it happen again. Other strategies used by this group include expressing regret (18%), accepting blame (3%), expressing a lack of intention (15%) and, finally, offering some kind of repair to make up for the error (3%). Examples of some of these strategies are displayed in Table 9.

Table 9: Strategies used by NSSs when apologizing (Overfield 1997)

Apology strategy	% of NSS who use each strategy	Example
Request forgiveness for the error	61%	No te enfades conmigo ‘ don’t get mad at me’
Provide an explanation for the error	22%	Se me descompuso el carro ‘ my car broke down’
Promise to not let it happen again	22%	No va a pasar otra vez, te lo prometo ‘ it won’t happen again, I promise’
Express regret	18%	Me siento fatal... ‘I feel really bad’
Accept blame	3%	Soy un desastre ‘ I am such a mess’
Express lack of intention	15%	Fue sin querer; fue un accidente ‘ it was an accident’
Offer to make up for the error	3%	Le pago lo que le costó ‘ I will pay you for it’

Thus we can see that western and non-western views on politeness vary in many respects and are often conflicting. Comparing target group responses to these patterns might help establish which of their norms the HHSs might have called into play when making requests or apologies and which language pragmatics might have affected their responses.

## **7. Study**

### **7.1 Participants**

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. Does the previously learned pragmatic knowledge of L1 English or L2 Hindi affect the production of the L3 Spanish? If so, in what way?
2. Does the perceived typological distance between L2 Hindi and L3 Spanish affect the transfer of pragmatic knowledge? If so, how does it affect the transfer?

In order to answer these questions, data were collected with the following research design. A total of 21 high school Spanish students were chosen from a high school in Austin; 11 bilingual students who were native speakers of English and heritage speakers of Hindi (HHS) and 10 Native English speakers (NES). All of these participants were in their fourth or fifth year of Spanish studies and none of them had visited or lived in a Spanish-speaking country, ensuring that their pragmatic knowledge was gained only from the classroom. The bilingual students (HHS) were interviewed in Hindi and in English to get a perspective of their language background and informally verify their L2 Hindi fluency.

The language background questionnaire that each student completed dealt with issues such as previous languages known, what language they considered to be their L1, how fluent they considered themselves in each language, their reading and writing capabilities in the L2, what languages they used to communicate with friends and family and, finally, if they felt that their L2 Hindi affected their study and acquisition of the L3 Spanish. Their responses to this questionnaire demonstrated that all the HHS students considered English to be their L1 as they had lived in the US for almost all their lives.

The HHS students' Hindi fluency was verified by their performance in a short informal dialogue with the interviewer in that language and they were asked to rate themselves on their knowledge of Hindi on a scale of 1 to 5. The responses were varied but most rated themselves between 3 and 4 and their oral interviews reflected this variation, although all participants did demonstrate the ability to converse in Hindi. The participants were also asked to rate their knowledge of English on the same scale and all 11 participants gave themselves the full 5 points. These ratings are presented in Table 10.

Table 10: HHS Hindi oral fluency ratings

<b>Student</b>	<b>Self Rating on Hindi Fluency</b>	<b>Ratings based on Oral Interviews</b>
PT	4	very fluent
RK	3	somewhat fluent
AM	4	fluent
AA	2-3	not fluent
AB	3	somewhat fluent
NM	4	very fluent
SS	4	very fluent
DR	4-5	very fluent
AM	3-4	fluent
GS	4	very fluent
AM	3-4	fluent

The Native English speakers (NES) learning Spanish claimed no knowledge of any other languages but there was some variation in the number of languages known by the Indian heritage students. Table 11 summarizes the language background of the HHS participants:

Table 11: Language background of HHS; Number of HHS students who:

1	spoke more than 3 languages	5
2	learned their L2 at home in an informal setting	11
3	speak Hindi at home with parents	9
4	believe that their knowledge of Hindi helped them in the acquisition of Spanish.	5
5	had lived in a Hindi-speaking country	10
6	thought/counted in Hindi	0
7	could read/write in Hindi/Urdu	4
8	watched Hindi movies at least once every 2 months	10
9	listened to Hindi music at least once a week	9
		n = 11

Table 11 shows that none of the HHS had any formal instruction in their L2 at an early age although 2 of the bilingual students are currently enrolled in weekly Hindi classes to learn to read and write in the language. All of the HHS participants are second-generation immigrants to the U.S. and their parents were born and raised in India. The parents moved here as adults but most of the children grew up in the U.S. and were either born here or moved here at a very young age. Nine of the 11 HHSs use Hindi mostly as a tool for communication with their parents or other adults in the community, and their Hindi use varies from 10% to 80% of the time at home or in

social functions. Only 5 of the students believed that their knowledge of Hindi helped their acquisition of Spanish, but only in the realm of phonology because they thought that “the structures of Hindi and Spanish were too different” to be compared. All others claimed that the differences between the two languages were too great to have an influence on each other, indicating that they perceived the two languages to be significantly distinct typologically .

Ten of the HHS had either lived in India during their childhood or visited India regularly for extended periods of time, a fact that might be relevant to their pragmatic knowledge of Hindi use. The amount of time the students had lived in India varied from 1 to 5 or 6 years. The students who had lived in India for 5-6 years were born there and lived there as children where they also learned Hindi as their L1. These students demonstrated fluency in Hindi in the oral interviews conducted by the investigator. However, when they moved to the U.S., they adopted English as their L1 and reserved Hindi use to very limited occasions. An interesting observation about the HHSs is that none of them indicated that they thought or counted in Hindi whereas all of them indicated that they thought or counted in English. This fact illustrates the idea that English is the HHSs’ dominant language and not Hindi, a fact that might influence the outcome of interlanguage transfer from L2 to L3. Finally, almost all of the HHS watched Hindi movies regularly (once every 1 to 2 months) and listened to Hindi music at least once a week, demonstrating that Hindi is a part of their lives even now. Hindi cinema has great cultural significance in India and among Indians living abroad. The act of watching Hindi movies implies that the learners still considered Hindi to be a big part of their culture and lives and not something foreign. It is also probable that watching Hindi movies frequently means that they were more in contact with Hindi pragmatics and the sociocultural rules governing it, which could affect the rate of transfer of pragmatic knowledge from L2 Hindi to L3 Spanish.

Besides the HHS participants, 10 NES English speakers learning Spanish were interviewed from the same high school to be used as a control group. These students were interviewed in English and in Spanish and were asked similar questions about their language background. Table 12 summarizes their language information.

Table 12: Language background of NES students of Spanish

1	Number of students who spoke more than 2 languages	0
4	Number of students who believe that their knowledge of English helped them in the acquisition of Spanish.	5
5	Number of students who had lived in a Spanish speaking country	0
		n = 10

As is evident from Table 8, all of the NES students were born and raised in the U.S. and spoke only English until middle or high school where they have been learning Spanish for the past 4 to 5 years. Five of the students thought that their knowledge of English probably helped them a little in their acquisition of Spanish because of the shared cognates between the two languages.

## 7.2 Methodology and Instruments

After the students' linguistic backgrounds were determined, they were presented with six situations that required them to use different forms of apologies or requests. The six situations that all of the learners responded to are:

### **Situation 1 – Informal apology**

Your friend lends you his/her favorite t-shirt to wear to a ball game. You spill orange soda on it and the t-shirt is permanently ruined. What do you say to him/her on returning the t-shirt?

**Situation 2 – Informal request**

You are at your friend's house for dinner and need to ask him/her to give you a glass of water.

How do you ask for it?

**Situation 3 – Formal request**

You are in the second week of your study abroad semester in Spain and are eating a meal with your host family at the dinner table. You need to ask your host mother to pass you the pitcher of water. How do you ask her for it?

**Situation 4 – Formal apology**

You take an uninvited friend with you to a party at your neighbor's house. This friend accidentally breaks your neighbor's priceless vase that he/she got on her travels to Guatemala.

What do you say to your neighbor?

**Situation 5 – Formal request**

You are applying for a grant at your university and need to ask a distinguished, unfamiliar professor in Spain for a recommendation letter. You also need him/her to not mention your terrible grades in his/her class. What do you say to him/her?

**Situation 6 – Informal apology**

One of your friends invites you to a party at his/her new apartment and you promise to show up but forget about it and don't go to the party. You see your friend the next day and he/she is upset about it. How do you apologize to him/her?

All 21 students (HHS and NES) were asked to respond in writing to these situations in Spanish. The HHSs' speech act responses were compared to those of the NES students' in the different situations requiring apologies and requests to determine if any significant differences

were found in the responses. These differences were then analyzed for evidence of interlanguage transfer from L2 to L3.

Finally, 12 students from Indian universities whose native language was Hindi (NHS) were also asked to respond in Hindi to the same 6 situations requiring apologies or requests. Their responses were used as baseline data and were taken as the prototypical responses one could expect from bilingual speakers of Hindi and English in India. These were then compared to the responses of the HHS from the U.S. to determine when the HHS used their pragmatic knowledge of Hindi or English to respond to the same request and apology situations.

The NHSs from India were university students ranging in age from 18 to 20 years. They were all born and raised in India, did not speak Spanish or any other Romance language and spoke at least one other Indian language like Gujarati or Marathi. Their language background information and other data were collected via the internet and no oral interview was conducted to test their Hindi fluency although all the participants rated their Hindi fluency as very high (at least a 4 or 5). They responded to the 6 situations in written Hindi and emailed the questionnaires back to the researcher. Their language background responses are displayed in Table 13.

Table 13: Language background of NHS; Number of students who:

1	spoke more than 3 languages	4
2	learnt their L2 at home in an informal setting	12
3	learned Hindi in a formal setting (Elementary, Middle or High school)	12
3	speak Hindi with parents and friends	12
6	thought/counted in Hindi	0
7	could read/write in Hindi/Urdu	12
8	watched Hindi movies at least once every 2 months	12
9	Number of students who listened to Hindi music at least once a week	12
		n = 12

All of the NHSs from India also spoke Indian English (one of the many varieties of English present in the world today) besides Hindi because English is the medium of education in most Indian schools. However, Hindi is the national language of India and is taught from elementary through high school; most students can read and write in Hindi. In addition, Hindi cinema plays a very big part in India's culture and heritage and is very popular among all Indians who flock to the theatre to watch the dozens of Hindi movies that are released every week. Thus, all of the NHSs are culturally and linguistically surrounded by a rich variety of Hindi culture and the sociocultural rules governing Hindi.

The results of the study were analyzed using percentages of frequencies alone and statistical analysis was not used due to the small number of participants. Therefore, this study

should be considered a precursor to larger studies where statistical analysis can be used to analyze the data.

## **8. Results**

The results of the study are discussed in this section. The participants' written responses to the 6 situations requiring apologies and requests are analyzed according to the head speech acts and adjunct speech acts they used. Their responses are then divided by situation type and contrasted among all 3 experimental groups (NHS, HHS and NES) to analyze the presence or absence of L2 transfer to L3 by the HHS students. A different pattern of responses is expected from the HHS group and the NES group.

In general, the results demonstrate a very limited amount of transfer the L2 Hindi of the bilingual speakers to their L3 Spanish, which could be attributed to the perceived typological difference between Hindi and Spanish. However, the HHSs did not perceive a vast typological distance between their L1 English and their L3 Spanish. The results mirror this perception because a larger amount of transfer is seen from L1 English to L3 Spanish in the responses of the HHSs.

### **8.1 Apologies**

As discussed in Section 3, Indians find it important to be perceived as polite by the rest of the community so that their politeness is not questioned. This behavior explains the frequent use of the forgiveness speech act by NHSs. However, this frequent use is not demonstrated by the HHSs whose responses seem to be more similar to those of the NESs. This result might indicate transfer from HHSs' L1 English to L3 Spanish. Table 14 provides a summary of the number of speakers who ask for forgiveness in each situation requiring an apology. In Situation 1, 30% of the NESs, 36% of the HHSs and 100% of the NHSs ask for forgiveness when apologizing to their friend about the ruined shirt. None of the NESs ask for forgiveness in Situation 4, whereas

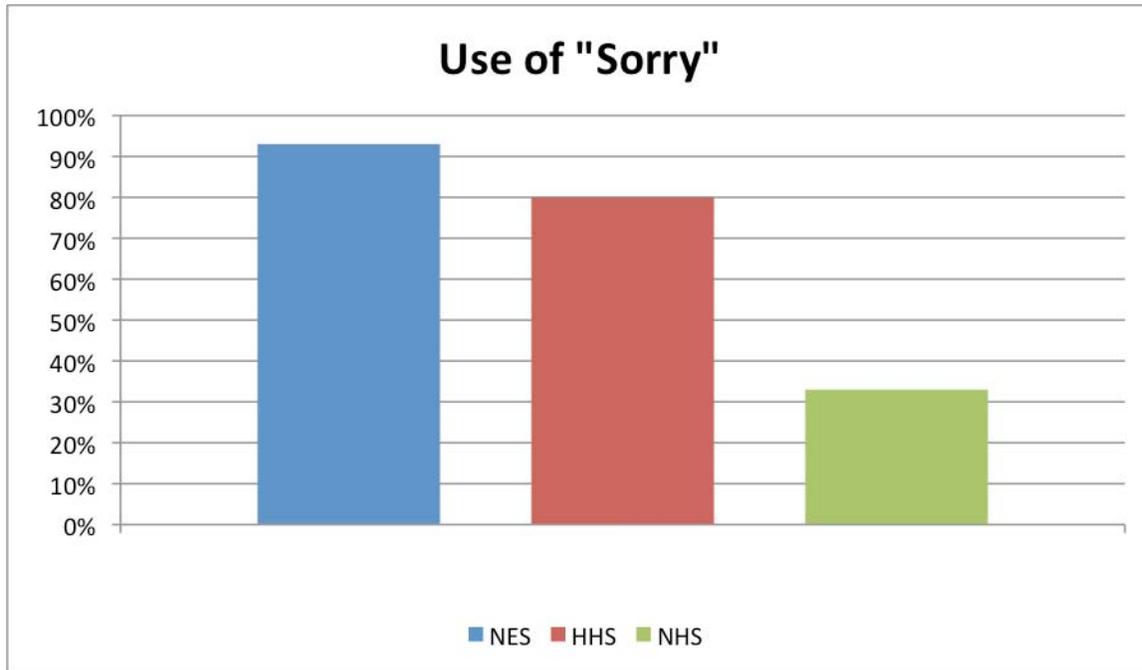
18% of HHSs and 91% of NHSs ask for forgiveness in the same situation. Finally, in Situation 6, 30% of NESs, 36% of HHSs and 50% of NHSs ask their friend for forgiveness.

Table 14: Number of speakers who ask for forgiveness

	Situation 1	Situation 4	Situation 6
NES (in Spanish) (Total = 10)	3 (30%)	0	3 (30%)
HHS (in Spanish) (Total = 11)	4 (36%)	2 (18%)	4 (36%)
NHS (in Hindi) (Total = 12)	12 (100%)	11 (91%)	6 (50%)

A high use of the speech act *lo siento* ‘I’m sorry’ was observed in the responses of the NESs and the HHSs in situations that required apologies. Ninety three percent of the NES students and 80% of the HHSs used *lo siento* ‘I’m sorry’ as the head speech act, whereas only 33% of NHSs used “I’m sorry” when apologizing in Spanish in both formal and informal situations (see Figure 2). The high use of this speech act in the HHSs’ responses could have carried over from their L1 (English) where a frequent use of ‘sorry’ is observed (Liao and Bresnahan 1996). Very few NHS used ‘I’m sorry’ or its equivalent speech act when apologizing in either formal or informal situations.

Figure 2: Use of *lo siento* ‘sorry’ in situations requiring apologies



The use of *lo siento* ‘sorry’ by all three participating groups in each situation requiring an apology is provided in Table 15. In situation 1, 100% of the NESs, 90% of the HHSs and 41% of the NHSs use the speech act *lo siento* ‘I’m sorry’ when making an apology. In Situation 4, 90% of the NESs, 90% of the HHSs and only 16% of the NHSs use *lo siento* ‘I’m sorry’ when apologizing. A similar trend is seen in Situation 6 where 90% of the NESs, 90% of the HHSs and only 8% of the NHSs use *lo siento* ‘I’m sorry’ when apologizing.

Table 15: Number of speakers using *lo siento* ‘I am sorry’ speech act

	Situation 1	Situation 4	Situation 6
NES using ‘I’m sorry’ speech act (in Spanish) (Total = 10)	10 (100%)	9 (90%)	9 (90%)
HHS using ‘I’m sorry’ speech act (in Spanish) (Total = 11)	10 (90%)	9 (90%)	10 (90%)
NHS ‘I’m sorry’ speech act (in Hindi) (Total = 12)	5 (41%)	2 (16%)	1 (8%)

The responses to each situation by each group of participants are discussed below.

### 1) Situation 1 – Informal apology

*Your friend lends you his/her favorite t-shirt to wear to a ball game. You spill orange soda on it and the t-shirt is permanently ruined. What do you say to him/her on returning the t-shirt?*

In this situation, NES and the HHS demonstrate a high use of the speech act *lo siento* ‘sorry’ (HHS 91%, e.g., *lo siento mucho chica, ¿perdoname?* ‘I am so sorry, forgive me?’) (NES 100% e.g., *lo siento para tu camiseta* ‘I am sorry about your t-shirt’). As discussed before, the use of *lo siento* ‘sorry’ could be a carryover from their L1 English where a high use of ‘sorry’ is seen in situations requiring apologies. However, only 42% of NHSs use this speech act when apologizing (See example 1).

Example 1 - *mujhe maaf kardo yaar, galti ho gayi*  
 me.DAT forgive do.2 SING.PRES CL friend.NOM mistake.NOM be.SUBJ  
 go.3sing.PAST.FEM  
 ‘forgive me my friend, it was a mistake’<sup>3</sup>

This result could indicate that in the Indian culture, while politeness is considered to be a very important trait in a person, admission of an error is considered a weakness and causes the apologizer to lose face in such situations. Error acknowledgement is seldom used by NHS when apologizing. Instead, in Situation 1, two of the NHS even tried to pass it off as a positive event, saying that the t-shirt now looked even better and was more trendy than before (See example 2).

Example 2 - *maine tere yeh shirt pe spray paint, karvaya naya fashion hai!*  
 I.INSTR your this shirt.NOM on spray paint.NOM  
 had-done.PAST.MASC new.SING.MASC fashion.NOM be.3SING.PRES  
 ‘I got your t-shirt painted to look like this, this is the new fashion!’

Another interesting observation about the responses to this situation is that 30% of the NES and 55% of the HHS offer other kinds of repair when apologizing to their friend (NES e.g., *¿dime, qué puedo hacer para mejorar la situación?* ‘tell me, what can I do to make it better?’); (HHS e.g., *sabes que eres mi amigo favorito...* ‘you know that you are my best friend’). None of the NHSs offer any other kind of repair and only 67% of NHS offer to pay their friend for the t-shirt. This result could mean that for the NHSs, offering an apology was enough to make up for their error; thus they did not make the extra effort as did the NESs and the HHSs to try to rectify the situation further. It could also be a linguistic manifestation of a Hindi cultural norm because, in many cases, offering monetary help to a person is considered rude (personal observation). It is

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<sup>3</sup> ABBREVIATIONS:

1: First person, 2: Second person, 3: Third person, SING: Singular, PRES: Present tense, FUT: Future tense, PAST: Past tense, SUBJ: Subjunctive, MASC: Masculine, FEM: Feminine, CL: Clitic, NOM: Nominative case, DAT: Dative case, INSTR: Instrumental case

seen as a means of showing off by the person who committed the offense and reflects an attitude that money could fix anything, which is severely rejected in Indian culture. However, this behavior does not seem to be the norm among the English-speaking groups (NES and HHS) and shows the high degree of assimilation that the HHSs have undergone during their stay in the U.S. A summary of the strategies used by all three groups is provided in Table 16.

Table 16: Summary of strategies used in Situation 1 by all groups

<b><u>Speech Act</u></b>	<b>NESs n = 10</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>HHSs n = 11</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>NHSs n = 12</b>	<b>%</b>
Apology (sorry)	10	100%	10	91%	5	42%
Explanation (it was an accident)	6	60%	6	55%	0	0%
Repair (buy a new t-shirt)	10	100	10	91	8	67%
Asking for forgiveness (please don't get mad/please forgive me)	3	30%	4	36%	12	100%
Other types of repair (you are my best friend)	3	30%	6	55%	0	0%
Pass it off as a good thing (this is the new trend)	0	0%	0	0%	2	16%

## 2) Situation 4 – Formal apology

*You take an uninvited friend with you to a party at your neighbor's house. This friend accidentally breaks your neighbor's priceless vase that he/she got on her travels to Guatemala.*

*What would you say to your neighbor?*

In this situation, 50% of the NESs shifted blame onto their friends (e.g., *lo siento, mi amigo está muy triste por su vaso* ‘sorry, my friend is very sad about your vase’) but only 9% of HHSs and 8% of NHSs (e.g., *Lo siento. Mi amiga es tonta. Pero no puedo hacer nada* ‘sorry, my friend is foolish but there is nothing that I can do’) did so. In the same situations, 45% of HHSs and 30% of NESs accept the responsibility for ruining their friends’ property (e.g., *lo siento, no sé porque traje a mi amiga...* ‘sorry, I don’t know why I brought my friend along...’) but a higher percentage (75%) of NHSs accept responsibility for their careless actions, which might point to transfer from L1 English to the HHSs production of L3 Spanish. Accepting one’s responsibility is an important norm of Indian culture, and Indian children are raised not only to be sensitive to situations that might cause them or their family shame or embarrassment (Anolli & Pascucci 2005) but are also always expected to avoid such situations and rectify them as best as they can. Thus admission of guilt and acceptance of responsibility in adverse situations is a common trait among Indians and is manifested in this situation. Therefore the acceptance of responsibility for an error committed by another person by the NHSs is evident in their responses but does not appear to have transferred to the HHSs’ L3 Spanish. The strategies used in Situation 4 are listed in Table 17.

Table 17: Summary of strategies used in Situation 4

<b><u>Speech Act</u></b>	<b>NESs n = 10</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>HHSs n = 11</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>NHSs n = 12</b>	<b>%</b>
Use of 'sorry'	9	90%	9	81%	6	50%
Explanation (it was an accident)	4	40%	7	63%	0	0%
Repair (can I pay for the vase)	5	50%	5	45%	0	0%
Shift blame onto friend	5	50%	1	9%	1	8%
Suggest another way to payback/replace vase (Can I do work around the house instead?)	3	30%	2	18%	1	8%
Accept responsibility for the friend	3	30%	5	45%	9	75%
Ask for forgiveness	0	0%	2	18%	11	91%

### 3) Situation 6 – Informal Apology

*One of your friends invites you to a party at his/her new apartment and you promise to show up but forget about it and don't go to the party. You see your friend the next day and he/she is upset about it. How do you apologize to him/her?*

In Situation 6 where students were asked to apologize to a friend for not showing up at their party, 7 of the 12 NHSs promised their friend that they would come to the friend's next party, an offer that was not used as a repair by either the NES group nor the HHS group. This repair is used very often by Hindi speakers in India who believe that invitations to a party or gathering of

any sort must be taken very seriously and consider it their duty to show up at the party, even when they might have more pressing engagements that they must cancel or accommodate (See example 3).

Example 3 – *agli baar zaroor aunga yaar, maaf kar*  
next.SING.FEM time sure come.1SING.FUT friend forgive do.2  
SING.PRES  
*de*  
CL  
'I will surely come next time, please forgive me'

This pattern means that not showing up for an event conveys impoliteness and is always followed with a long and detailed explanation about why the apologizer did not arrive at the event.

A high use of 'sorry' by NESs (90%) and the HHSs (90%) is also seen in the responses to this situation. As discussed in Situation 1, this linguistic feature could be evidence of transfer from the HHSs L1 English to their L3 Spanish. Other strategies used by HHSs to apologize in this situation include:

- asking their friend for forgiveness (36%; e.g., *sé que tu eres enojada. Perdoname chica, por favor* 'I know that you are mad at me. Please forgive me')
- providing an explanation for their absence (90%; e.g., *¡dios mio! ¡Lo siento! La noche pasada tenía mucha tarea y dormí a las dos de la mañana...* 'oh no! I am sorry! I had a lot of homework last night and I fell asleep at 2:00 am...')
- using other repair (18%; e.g., *¿puedo visitarte hoy o otro día para verlo?* 'can I come visit you today or tomorrow to see it?')

A summary of the strategies used by all three participant groups is provided in Table 18.

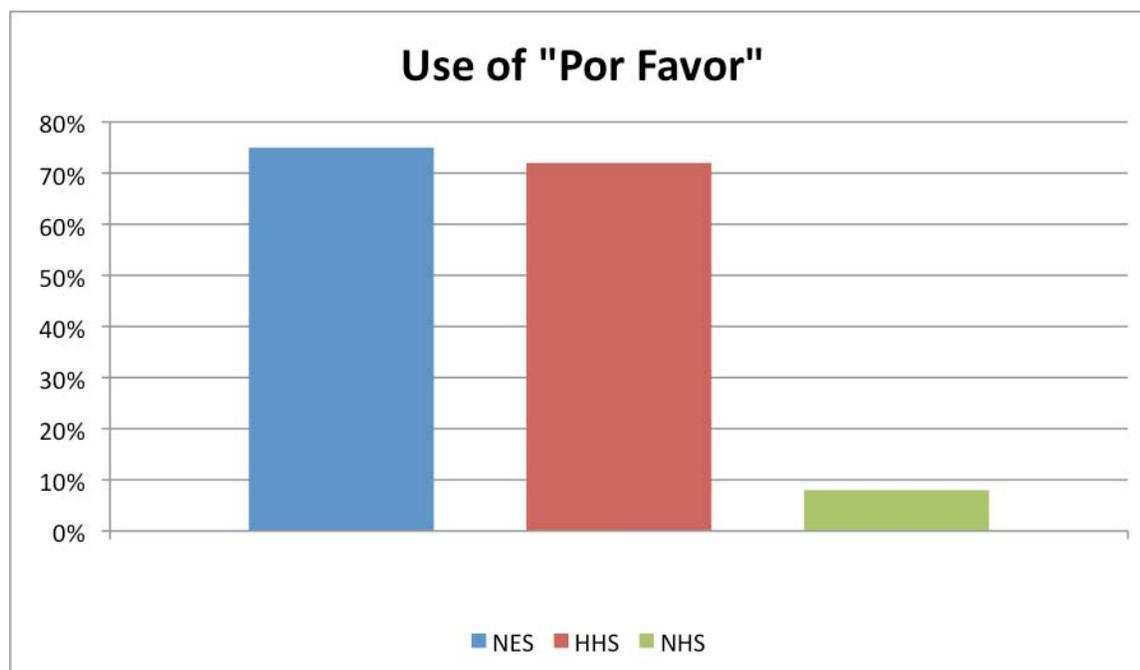
Table 18: Summary of apology strategies used in Situation 6

<u>Speech Act</u>	<b>NESs n = 10</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>HHSs n = 11</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>NHSs n = 12</b>	<b>%</b>
Use of 'sorry'	9	90%	10	90%	1	8%
Forgiveness (please don't be mad/please forgive me)	3	30%	4	36%	6	48%
Explanation (I was sick)	9	90%	10	90%	10	80%
Other repair (I will make it up to you in some way)	4	40%	2	18%	0	0%
Other repair (I promise to come to the next party)	1	10%	2	18%	7	56%

## 8.2 Requests

In situations requiring requests, a similarity between NES and the HHS is that, overall, 75% of the NESs and 73% of the HHSs used *por favor* 'please' followed by the phrase *¿puede darme/traerme agua?* 'Could you give me some water?' to ask for water in both formal and informal situations. This result is presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Use of *por favor* ‘please’ in situations requiring requests



This finding could also be attributed to their L1 English where a similar strategy is used when asking someone for something: e.g., ‘Could you give me a glass of water, please?’. The participant’s responses to this situation demonstrate transfer from the HHSs’ L1 English to their L3 Spanish. Table 19 lists the use of *por favor* ‘please’ by participants in each situation requiring apologies. In Situation 2, 80% of the NESs and 72% of the HHSs use *por favor* ‘please’ whereas none of the NHSs use this speech act when making a request. Situation 3 demonstrates similar percentages where 80% of the NESs and 72% of the HHSs use *por favor* ‘please’ but only 8% of the NHSs use *por favor* ‘please’ in their responses. However, the pattern of use of *por favor* ‘please’ deviates from Situations 2 and 3 than in Situation 5. In this latter case, none of the NESs apologize use *por favor* ‘please’ in the first part of the request and only 40% of the NESs use *por favor* ‘please’ in the second part of the request. On the other hand, 36% of HHSs and 8% of NHSs use *por favor* ‘please’ in the first part of Situation 5 and 63% of the HHSs and 58% of the

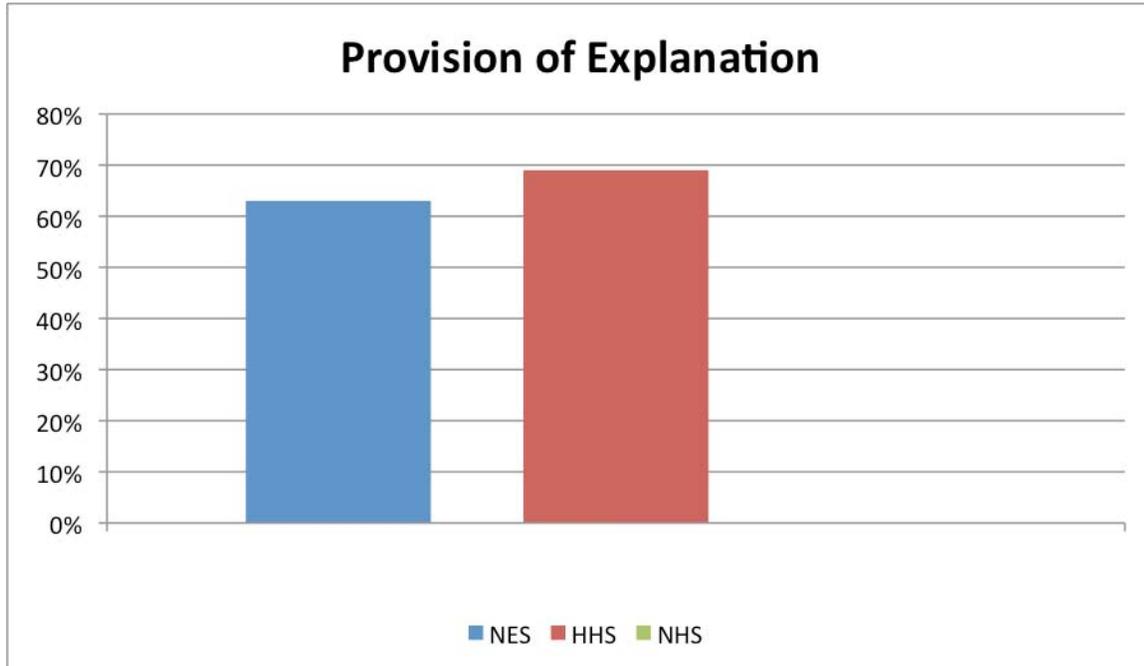
NHSs use *por favor* ‘please’ in the second part. The possible reasons for this are discussed later in this section.

Table 19: Use of *por favor* ‘please’ in situations requiring requests

	Situation 2	Situation 3	Situation 5 (part1)	Situation 5 (part 2)
NES (in Spanish) (n = 10)	8 (80%)	8 (80%)	0 (0%)	4 (40%)
HHS (in Spanish) (n = 11)	8 (72%)	8 (72%)	4 (36%)	7 (63%)
NHS (in Hindi) (n = 12)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	7(58%)

The overall percentages of speakers who provided an explanation about why they were making a particular request were also very similar in two groups (NES: 63%; HHS: 69%) as is demonstrated in Figure 4. This trend is found in native speakers of English because they are considered to prefer negative politeness and to use this tactic of providing an explanation to minimize imposition and soften their request (Fukushima 1996). None of the NHSs provided an explanation in any of the situations requiring requests. So again, the influence of L1 English is predominant in the HHS’s responses in Spanish.

Figure 4: Speakers who provide an explanation in request situations



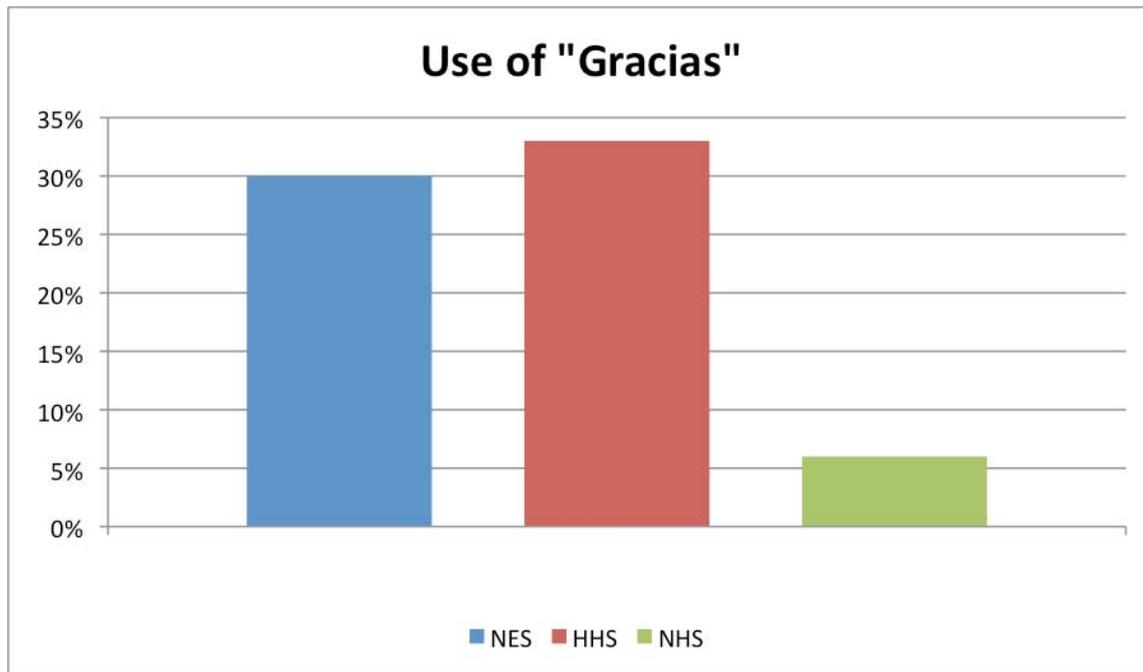
An analysis of the participants' responses to each situation requiring requests demonstrates that in Situation 2, 20% of NESs and 18% of HHSs provided an explanation about their request. In Situation 3, 30% of NESs and 18% of HHSs followed their request with an explanation, and finally in Situation 5, 10% of NESs and 36% of HHSs provided an explanation when making a request. None of the NHSs provided an explanation in any of these situations. Table 20 demonstrates the number of participants providing an explanation in each situation.

Table 20: Number of speakers providing an explanation

	Situation 2	Situation 3	Situation 5
NES (in Spanish) (Total = 10)	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	1 (10%)
HHS (in Spanish) (Total = 11)	2 (18%)	2 (18%)	4 (36%)
NHS (in Hindi) (Total = 12)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Finally, 30% of the NESs and 33% of the HHSs (overall) ended their requests by thanking the person who would be acting upon the request in contrast to only 6% of the NHSs (See Figure 5).

Figure 5: Speakers who use *gracias* ‘thank you’ when making a request



In these situations, responses of the HHS group deviate from those of the NHSs because, in Hindi, one does not use ‘thank you’ and ‘sorry’ as much as in English or Spanish. In fact, even the word for ‘thank you’ in Hindi is cumbersome and archaic. When people do want to express their gratitude, they often use the English words “thank you” to do so, except in very formal situations. Thus the NHSs might have avoided the use of *gracias* ‘thank you’ in this situation

because it is not commonly used in Hindi, or to avoid showing disrespect to the professor by assuming the request would be met before the professor actually agreed to act. This difference is seen in the NHSs' and HHSs' responses to every situation requiring requests. Twenty percent of NESs and 36% of HHSs use *gracias* 'thank you' in Situation 2, but none of the NHSs use this speech act in the same Situation. A similar pattern is seen in Situation 3 where 30% of NESs and 36% of HHSs use *gracias* 'thank you' but 0% of the NHSs use it. In Situation 5, 40% of NESs, 27% of HHSs and 16% of NHSs use *gracias* 'thank you' when making a request. The use of *gracias* 'thank you' by each group of speakers in each situation is illustrated in Table 21.

Table 21: Number of speakers using *gracias* 'thank you'

	Situation 2	Situation 3	Situation 5
NES (in Spanish) (Total = 10)	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	4 (40%)
HHS (in Spanish) (Total = 11)	4 (36%)	4 (36%)	3 (27%)
NHS (in Hindi) (Total = 12)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (16%)

Overall, learners' responses to the situations requiring requests demonstrate a greater amount of transfer from HHSs' L1 English to their L3 Spanish than from their L2 Hindi. The responses to each situation by each group of participants are discussed below.

#### 4) Situation 2 – Informal request

*You are at your friend's house for dinner and need to ask him/her to pass on to you the pitcher of water. How would you ask for it?*

The first interesting observation about the responses to this situation is that all 12 NHSs (100%) use commands to make this request whereas only 3 NESs (30%), and 2 HHSs (18%) use commands to ask for water (e.g., *Amigo, pase el agua, por favor* 'friend, pass me the water,

please'). None of the NHSs use 'please' when making this request and none of them say 'thank you'. This pattern suggests that requests for water are not seen as impositions by NHSs, as reflected in their responses. This pattern is also not transferred from the HHSs L2 Hindi to their L3 Spanish because their responses demonstrate the use of *por favor* 'please' and *gracias* 'thank you' even when making an informal request. (e.g., Miguel, *¿puedes dar el agua por favor? Gracias.* 'Miguel, can you give me the water please? Thanks'; *¿me puedes dar un vaso de agua, por favor? Tengo mucho sed.* 'Can you give me a glass of water please? I am very thirsty').

Finally, 70% of the NES and 72% of the HHS form the request like a question, to soften it by making it appear like a choice (e.g., *¿me puedes dar un vaso de agua, por favor?* 'Can you give me a glass of water please?') whereas only 1 NHS (8%) uses this strategy. Thus, the HHS responses to this situation do not show evidence of transfer from L2 Hindi to L3 Spanish but indicate L1 English influence on L3 Spanish. Table 22 provides a summary of the request strategies used by the learners in Situation 2.

Table 22: Summary of strategies used in Situation 2

<u>Speech Act</u>	NESs n = 10	%	HHSs n = 11	%	NHSs n = 12	%
Use of commands	3	30%	2	18%	12	100%
Explanation (I am so thirsty)	0	0%	2	18%	0	0%
Use of <i>por favor</i>	8	80%	8	72%	0	0%
Request in the form of a question (may I have a glass of water?)	7	70%	8	72%	1	8%
Use of 'thank you'	2	20%	4	36%	0	0%

### 5) Situation 3 – Formal request

*You are in the second week of your study abroad semester in Spain and are eating a meal with your host family at the dinner table. You need to ask your host mother to give you the pitcher of water. How would you ask her for it?*

In this situation one of the most salient differences between the NESs and the HHSs is the consistent use of the formal register *Usted* 'you' by the HHSs in formal situations (100% ) vs. the inconsistent use of the same pronoun by the NES students (50% of the time), even in extremely formal situations. NHSs (0%) and HHSs (0%) also avoid the use of the informal register (Spanish, *tú* 'you-informal'; Hindi: *tum* 'you-informal') when addressing their host mother in this situation, whereas 50% of the NESs use the informal Spanish pronoun *tú* 'you' to address their host mother. These results might be due to the fact that Hindi exhibits a similar difference between *tú* 'you-informal' and *usted* 'you-formal' (Hindi: *tum* 'you-informal' vs. *aap*

'you-formal'), which appears in the same situations as the Spanish pronouns where they are in fact necessary to demonstrate respect. Thus this pattern can be attributed to transfer from the L2 Hindi to the L3 Spanish because their L1 English does not include this pronominal distinction. A high use of *por favor* 'please' is also seen in NES (80%) and HHS (72%) learners' responses. This result could be attributed to transfer from English or it could be a reaction to the social distance the students feel from the requestee, their host mother, because she is older and they would not consider her a friend.

None of the NHSs use *krupya* 'please' or *dhanyawaad* 'thank you' in this situation, which illustrates that the NHS do not feel any hesitation in making a request for water and do not perceive it as an imposition in any way, despite the formal register. Moreover, the NHSs might feel that their consistent use of *aap* 'you-formal' gives the situation an adequate appearance of formality; therefore they might not have felt compelled to use more strategies to soften the request any further. Table 23 lists the strategies used by the learners in Situation 3.

Table 23: Summary of strategies used in Situation 3

<b><u>Speech Act</u></b>	<b>NESs n = 10</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>HHSs n = 11</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>NHSs n = 12</b>	<b>%</b>
Use of 'please'	8	80%	8	72%	1	8%
Use of formal register ( <i>Ud.</i> <i>or aap</i> )	5	50%	11	100%	12	100%
Use of 'excuse me'	1	10%	0	0%	0	0%
Use of 'thank you'	3	30%	4	36%	0	0%
Use of informal register ( <i>tú</i> <i>or tum</i> )	5	50%	0	0%	0	0%
Explanation (I am so thirsty)	0	0%	2	18%	0	0%
Speaker oriented question (may <i>I</i> have a glass of water? vs. could <i>you</i> give me a glass of water?)	0	0%	0	0%	4	33%
Use of a downgrader ( <i>zara</i> <i>mujhe paani denge</i> ('could you do me a <i>small</i> favor?')	0	0%	0	0%	2	0%

## 6) Situation 5 – Formal request

*You are applying for a grant at your university and need to ask a distinguished, unfamiliar professor in Spain for a recommendation letter. You also need him/her to not mention your terrible grades in his/her class. What would you say to him/her?*

The lack of directness discussed in Section 3 is apparent in the NHSs responses to this situation where they have to ask a professor to write them a recommendation letter without mentioning their poor grades. Nine of the 12 students do not mention their grades at all and assume that the professor would be nice enough not to mention them in a letter of recommendation. It is probably something realistic that they would do in similar circumstances because helping people in need is seen as a duty that must be taken seriously in the Hindi culture, even if it means bending the rules a bit to achieve that. This attitude also reflects the idea mentioned earlier of how the person granting the favor is supposed to feel honored to have been asked for this favor. This attitude is probably what leaves the students feeling confident about the outcome of the recommendation letter, even when they fail to mention their poor grades.

All 12 NHSs (100%) address the professor using the formal register of *'aap'*, *'you'* whereas only 8 NESs (80%) and 9 HHSs (90%) use the formal register. An observation here is that only 4 NES students (40%) use *por favor* *'please'* in the second part of the situation whereas 7 HHS students (63%, e.g., *pero mis calificaciones no son muy buenos. ¿Puede no escribir sobre mis calificaciones, por favor?* *'but my grades are not very good. Could you not write about my grades please?'*) and 7 NHSs (56%) use it in the same situation. This result is curious given that the second part of this situation is considered to bear more *'weight'* and is a bigger favor to request (Koike and Flanzer 2004). Thus one would logically expect students from both groups to use *por favor* *'please'*. However, the higher use of this expression by the Hindi-speaking students

(HHS and NHS) could be dictated by the social hierarchy (Bharuthram 2003) that affects Hindi speakers. Based on the rules of social hierarchy, people older or more qualified than the speaker are treated more respectfully and politely. This social norm cannot be overstepped lightly and, if not followed, the speakers are disdained and in many cases even ostracized by their community. This norm may explain why both groups of Hindi speakers demonstrate a higher use of ‘please’ in this situation when making a request to a professor. Thus it might be possible that the social hierarchy norms that are linguistically manifested in the speech of Hindi speakers influenced the HHSs’ L3 Spanish. Table 24 presents a list of the request strategies used by the participants in Situation 5.

Table 24: Summary of strategies used in Situation 5

<b><u>Speech Act</u></b>	<b>NESs n = 10</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>HHSs n = 11</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>NHSs n = 12</b>	<b>%</b>
Use of ‘please’ (1st part of request)	0	0%	4	36%	1	8%
Use of ‘please’ (2nd part of request)	4	40%	7	63%	7	56%
Use of formal register ( <i>Ud.</i> or <i>aap</i> )	8	80%	9	81%	11	88%
Use of <i>gracias</i>	4	40%	3	27%	2	16%
Other types of repair (you are my favorite professor)	1	10%	0	0%	0	0%
Explanation (I was having a rough semester)	1	10%	1	9%	0	0%

### **8.3 Summary**

The data demonstrate that positive evidence of transfer from learners' L1 English and L2 Hindi does indeed exist although only a couple of instances of transfer from L2 Hindi to L3 Spanish are visible in the responses of the HHSs and many more instances of transfer are seen from L1 English to L3 Spanish. The limited amount of transfer that is evidenced from L2 Hindi to L3 Spanish can be attributed to the fact that the HHSs have lived in the U.S. longer than they have lived (if ever) in the country where Hindi is spoken, which has led them to be affected by U.S. language and culture. The age of the participants is another important factor leading to greater amount of transfer from the HHSs L1 English than their L2 Hindi. The HHSs are high school students and probably feel a high desire to fit in with their peers. This desire might lead them to reject their L2 Hindi and Hindi culture in favor of American language and culture, making English their dominant language. Therefore, these results might demonstrate a selective process of pragmatic transfer where only some elements of a previously known language are transferred to the L3. The possible reasons in support of the low rate of transfer from L2 Hindi to L3 Spanish and the higher rate of transfer from L1 English to L3 Spanish are discussed here.

### **8.4 Reasons for limited transfer of pragmatic knowledge**

#### **1. Age of the participants**

The age of the participants seems to be one of the most important factors leading to a higher degree of transfer from the HHSs' L1 English to their L3 Spanish than from their L2 Hindi. High school students exhibit a strong desire to assimilate and be accepted by their peers. This desire often leads them to reject their native or heritage language. They try to distance themselves from being associated with the "old country" where their parents are from and are eager to adopt the culture and language of their home country. This has probably led English to be the dominant

language of the HHSs and has therefore affected the transfer of pragmatic knowledge to their L3 Spanish.

## **2. Number of years of residence in the US**

The heritage speakers of Hindi have lived in the U.S. longer than they have lived (if ever) in the country where Hindi is spoken. This fact may have led them to be predominantly affected by U.S. cultural norms and could be a factor affecting the low rate of transfer from HHSs' L2 Hindi to their L3 Spanish. The high number of years the HHSs have lived in the U.S. could also be the reason why they would rely more on English and its associated politeness norms than on Indian culture and politeness norms, and would transfer pragmatic knowledge from English to produce their L3 Spanish.

## **3. Perceived typological distance between languages**

Kellerman (1983) proposed that the learner's perception of the typological distance between languages will influence the amount of transfer that takes place between any two languages. He claimed that the greater the distance, the lesser the transfer. This theory seems to be supported by this study. The language background questionnaire gives us an insight into the bilingual learners' perception about how, in their opinion, the L2 Hindi is not very similar to L3 Spanish but that their L1 English is similar to Spanish and helps them learn Spanish. The students even pointed out that, according to their perceptions, their previous knowledge of Hindi might help them master the sound system of Spanish but no other structures. This perception of a vast difference between the Hindi and Spanish languages probably prevents a greater amount of transfer from taking place between the two languages. On the other hand, the distance between English and Spanish perceived by the HHSs is not very great. This factor might have contributed to the higher degree of transfer from English to Spanish that is evident in the HHSs' responses. Gass

and Selinker (2001) explained this phenomenon in their book, *Second Language Acquisition* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), by stating that “perceived language distance is an important variable in the study of interlanguage transfer. Languages that are closely related may influence learners about what is language-neutral and what is language-specific” (p. 148). They also claim that language-neutral items are transferred easily while language-specific items are not. In this case, the perceived gap between Hindi and Spanish languages may lead the students to believe that there are more cases of language-specific than language-neutral items and that these two languages do not have much in common, discouraging transfer of knowledge. Therefore it is possible that the perceived distance between Hindi and Spanish has influenced and, consequently, mitigated the transfer of knowledge between these two languages.

#### **4. Number of years of Spanish study**

It is believed that as learners become more proficient in their TL, they begin to depend less on their previously known languages (Gass and Selinker 2001), which leads to a reduction in the transfer of knowledge. They begin to notice the differences between the two languages and no longer use their L1 or L2 as a “fall back” option, but instead use their knowledge of the TL to resolve communication issues. This factor might also affect transfer from L2 to L3 in this study, as participants are currently in their fifth year of L3 Spanish study. This factor may have helped them to have sufficient knowledge about the target language, in which case they probably did not see the need to refer back to their L2 for help.

#### **5. Incomplete Acquisition of L2 Hindi**

Incomplete acquisition of the heritage language, particularly in the area of pragmatics might also be an important explanation for the low level of interlanguage transfer from the HHSs’ L2 Hindi to their L3 Spanish and the higher level of transfer of pragmatic knowledge from the HHSs L1

English to their L3 Spanish. Montrul, Foote and Perpiñan (2008: 2) state that a variety of factors including age and context of acquisition affect the acquisition of an L2, the “outcome of which is often variable and incomplete.” Since the HHSs did not grow up in a Hindi speaking society, it is possible that they did not have sufficient exposure to the Hindi-speaking culture, which might have impeded in the development of relevant linguistic and especially pragmatic skills. This linguistic trait is often observed in heritage language speakers who lack the opportunity to fully develop their L2 in the same manner as their L1 due to various factors like “variable input and use of language” (Montrul, Foote and Perpiñan 2008: 4) and might be a factor affecting the rate of interlanguage transfer from learners’ L1 or L2 to their L3.

#### **6. Modality of data collection**

Koike and Palmiere’s (2007) study analyzed transfer of L1 and L2 pragmatic expression in oral and written modalities by Spanish-speaking L3 Portuguese learners in the U.S. Results demonstrated transfer to be a modality-sensitive phenomenon. This result could explain the limited transfer evidenced from L2 Hindi to L3 Spanish in this study because HHSs did not use their L2 Hindi for reading or writing but only for oral expression, whereas they used their L3 Spanish for both modalities. For this reason, it is possible that more transfer might have been evident if the elicitation tasks used for data collection had included oral role-play as well as written responses to determine if learners transferred more pragmatic information from L2 Hindi to L3 Spanish in a different modality.

#### **7. Informal context of L2 acquisition**

One hypothesis proposed by this paper to explain the results of this study is that, in the case of the HHS students, they only learned Hindi at home in an informal setting and many of them cannot read or write the language. They use it only to communicate verbally with a small, select

group of people. The situations when their L2 is used might also be very specific and limited in number and nature. This usage might indicate that their Hindi language is not fully developed or solidly reinforced and therefore not accessible for transfer. This factor might also show that, just like the NES students, the HHS probably transferred knowledge from English, which they learned in a formal environment and is their dominant language. Another study to compare the amount of transfer from L1 English and L2 Hindi might help to support this theory.

According to Ringbom (1986), pragmatic transfer between languages may occur only if the student is sufficiently fluent in the language from which the transfer occurs. He suggests that for transfer of meaning to occur, a high level of fluency is required in the previously known language and, in the absence of this fluency, transfer of form is more likely to appear than transfer of meaning. Since the bilingual students here demonstrated a higher fluency in English than in Hindi and since they also rated themselves to have a better knowledge of English than Hindi, this factor likely affected the transfer of pragmatic knowledge from L2 to L3.

## 9. Conclusions

The results of this study show that the hypothesis provided at the beginning was only partially supported by the responses from the two experimental groups. The data demonstrated little evidence of interlanguage transfer. Some of the reasons for the results include the age of the participants, a limited participant pool, and the perceived distance between L2 Hindi and L3 Spanish. We now return to the research questions of the study and attempt to answer them based on the results obtained.

1. Does the previously learned pragmatic knowledge of L1 English or L2 Hindi affect the production of the L3 Spanish?

As can be seen by the comparison of responses from the HHS and the NHS, interlanguage transfer did take place between Hindi and Spanish. Although there were not numerous instances of transfer from L2 Hindi to L3 Spanish, those few cases, like the frequent use of the formal register *Usted* ‘you’ by the HHS in formal situations, that illustrated transfer can be used as evidence to support interlanguage transfer from L2 to L3. There could have been transfer from the L2 to the L3 at an earlier stage, when the students’ L3 was not well developed. In conclusion, there was a little evidence of L2 influence on L3 at this point in time for these learners. The responses of both groups demonstrated enough differences to lead us to believe the previous knowledge of L2 Hindi did affect the learning and production of L3 Spanish pragmatic knowledge to some extent, although the majority of transfer was from the L1 to the L3.

1. If so, in what way does it affect the learning?

The data collected from the HHS group and the NES group illustrate that interlanguage transfer helps learners “plug in the gaps” in their L3 knowledge when they perceive salient similarities

between the two languages. In such instances, learners use their pragmatic knowledge from the L2 to appropriately handle similar situations in L3 by transferring this pragmatic knowledge.

2. Does the perceived typological distance between L2 Hindi and L3 Spanish affect the transfer of pragmatic knowledge?

There is ample evidence provided by this study to show that perceived language distance is an influential factor in determining interlanguage transfer. The bilingual speakers perceived a large gap between Hindi and Spanish, which mitigated transfer of knowledge between these two languages. This factor is also corroborated by Koike and Flanzer's (2004) study. Learners that had previous knowledge of Spanish and who were learning Portuguese as their L3 perceived these two languages to be typologically similar. They were presented with similar situations requiring the use of apologies and requests and they showed evidence of transfer of knowledge from their L2 Spanish to their L3 Portuguese. This finding shows that the perceived distance can affect interlanguage transfer and can be used to predict transfer loosely between languages.

3. If so, how does it affect the transfer?

Based on the results of this study, we can conclude that the greater the perceived distance between two languages, the fewer instances there are of transfer of knowledge, corroborating Kellerman (1983). While the few instances of transfer found in our results do demonstrate that previously-known languages could play a part in L3 or L4 acquisition, the general separation of Hindi and Spanish in the HHSs' minds helps us to confirm Kellerman's (1983) hypothesis that the farther apart two languages are, the harder it is to link them by interlanguage transfer.

### **9.1 Limitations of the study**

The biggest limitation of this study is that the proficiency level of the L2 Hindi of the bilingual students could not be determined by a standard test given to all participants, but depended on

their language background as reported by themselves, a short oral interview, and the subjective opinion of the interviewer and the student's self evaluation of proficiency. The fact that the interview was conducted orally but the data were collected via written responses may also be an important limitation of the study. This factor might have affected the final results of the study because a low level of L2 Hindi knowledge might prevent students from transferring any information from the L2 to the L3. A standardized test to determine the bilingual students' L2 oral proficiency level in Hindi is therefore highly recommended in future studies.

Future studies might also consider including a larger number of participants because in investigations with small populations, individual differences could skew the final results and not provide a comprehensive picture of the actual learning situation. Besides, such a small number of responses cannot account for the behavior of a bigger learner population; thus the numbers and conclusions obtained from this study must be considered with their limitations.

Comparative data from native speakers of Spanish might also help to strengthen and support the conclusions drawn by this study. Finally, it might be useful to compare the results of English-Hindi bilingual students at different levels of L3 Spanish acquisition. This information might help us to determine if the level of L3 proficiency correlates with interlanguage transfer and, if yes, to what extent.

Despite these criticisms, this study is one of the first to compare the influence of L2 Hindi on the learners of L3 Spanish. The surge in the number of Indians opting to study this language, both in the United States and in India, shows that studies like this one will be a valuable addition to the field of SLA and can help in the understanding of SLA and L2 pedagogy.

## Appendix A

### Language Background Questionnaire

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What languages do you speak?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What is your native language/mother tongue?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Rate yourself on the fluency of these languages.  

Language 1:_____	1	2	3	4	5
Language 2:_____	1	2	3	4	5
Language 3:_____	1	2	3	4	5
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Can you read and write in these languages?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Where did you learn these languages?

6. Have you lived in a country where these languages are spoken? For how long?
  
7. What languages do you speak at home? At school? In any other communities that you belong to?
  
8. In what language do you count/think?
  
9. Do you feel that the knowledge of these languages affects your study of Spanish? If so, how?
  
10. How much daily contact do you have with these languages? For example, do you watch movies in these languages? Do you read books in these languages? Do you visit websites that use these languages?

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## **Vita**

Mansi Shah attended Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics, Mumbai India and graduated with a B.Com degree in 2001. In 2002 she entered the University of Texas at Austin, Texas. She received the degree of Bachelor of Arts from UT, Austin in December, 2004. During the following years she was employed as a bilingual Kindergarten teacher at Neidig Elementary School in Elgin, Texas. In September, 2007, she entered the Graduate School at The University of Texas at Austin.

Permanent address: 5505 Delwood Dr, Austin, TX 78723

This report was typed by Mansi Shah