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# A pragmatic analysis of requests and refusals as produced in Spanish and English: a case study of bilingual children

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And is considered worthy of approval in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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## Dedications

I dedicate my thesis to my husband, Gareth L. Scyner, who always motivates me to give my best and is there when I need him, ¡muchas gracias! I will always be there for you too. I dedicate this work and give special thanks to our beautiful children Leo and Oliver for their unconditional love, support and patience. Both of you made this thesis possible! I adore you bebés.

To Manuel, although you are no longer in this world, your memory and love will continue forever in my heart.

To myself because I've made it!

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**Abstract**

Spanish - English native speakers have their own rules of conversation and interaction. Their culture dramatically influences the way people establish a conversation and how people make requests and refusals. Requests and refusals are complex, face-threatening speech acts, which are commonly present in communicative interactions. These types of speech acts frequently occur in the family context and require high-level, sophisticated politeness strategies when used by bilingual children.

The purpose of this study is two-fold: firstly, to describe the most salient characteristics of how bilingual children make refusals and requests in English and Spanish. Secondly, to investigate whether their speech acts were appropriate in both languages. This case study investigation analysed 463 speech acts, 220 requests and 243 refusals, of two Mexican-British children aged 10 and 12, who have been raised as bilinguals at home. The data was gathered in the family domain through two situational instruments for English and Spanish.

The findings of the study revealed similarities and differences in the patterns of requests and refusals the participants produced for both languages. The participants preferred using direct strategies, supportive reasons and preparators to mitigate the force of their requests in both languages. There was a preference for indirect strategies in English and direct and indirect strategies in Spanish concerning refusals. The results also showed code-switching and language transfer in the production of requests and refusals. The findings and the retrospective interview revealed that the participants might not yet be fully aware of the pragmatic patterns employed in both cultures. The results also showed that the participants might have been influenced more by one of their languages over the other, due to the degree of immersion they experienced at home in English and Spanish. These results and their implications are described within this thesis. Finally, the conclusions draw attention to the fact that pragmatic competence development is as important as developing linguistic competence, especially in older bilingual children, an area of study which seems to have been neglected so far.

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# Chapter I: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction to the Problem

In the past several decades, the analysis of requests and refusals has played an essential role in pragmatics. However, most studies have been focused on explaining the performance of these speech acts performed by very young children and being focused primarily on adult second language learners.

Requests and refusals are complex, face-threatening speech acts (FTA). FTAs are ones that threaten the addressee's freedom from imposition (Leech, 2014), which are commonly present in communicative interactions (Stavans & Webman Shafran, 2018), (Chen et al., cited in (Félix-Brasdefer, 2010). Requests and refusals require that speakers use various politeness strategies to achieve a communicative end (Xiaoning, 2017). These types of speech acts frequently occur in the family context and need high-level, sophisticated strategies because apart from the awkwardness the FTA's cause to both speaker and hearer, they fall within the relatively narrow ranges of appropriateness (Kreishan, 2018). Research suggests that acquiring two languages simultaneously requires one to be linguistically capable and communicate and understand others appropriately and effectively. This communicative competence extends to building and maintaining good social relationships with others in wide-ranging social situations and activities. Thus, developing a high-level pragmatic competence to achieve speakers' communicative goals is needed (Hymes, cited in LoCastro 2003). Pragmatic competence refers to the need to be nurtured and developed to allow such users of a language the dual ability to communicate while avoiding misunderstandings. It involves the ability to interact clearly and appropriately in a particular situation. Kasper (cited in Flores-Salgado, 2016) has defined *pragmatic competence* as the knowledge of linguistic types, their roles, and the social rules that enable an individual to interpret a message in a specific language. As a result, having this knowledge makes it possible to conduct effective and appropriate interactions among

people in any given situation. It is also worth pointing out that the notion of pragmatic competence is closely linked to the philosophy of politeness. Brown and Levinson refer to “the recognition and linguistic acknowledgement of much subtler threats to the self-image that a person presents publicly” (Birner, 2013 p. 201). Politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, cited in Haugh and Watanabe, 2017) refers to “the recognition and linguistic acknowledgement of much subtler threats to the self-image that a person presents publicly” (Birner, 2013 p. 201). According to this theory, politeness strategies are used to prevent interpersonal confrontation and minimise face threats.

This investigation explores the field of language acquisition, specifically focussing on pragmatics, “the study of language use in context” (Birner, 2013 p. 2). Crystal (cited in Deda, 2013) defines *pragmatics* as the analysis of language from the perspective of its users, especially their choices, the constraints they face while using language in social interaction, and the impact their choices have on the other participants in a communication act. This case study analyses the interactions of two Mexican-British children aged 10 and 12 who have been raised bilingually at home and are linguistically competent in both languages for their ages. The home context has been chosen as the main area for data gathering, primarily because it is the most natural and relaxed setting to observe over an extended period. Furthermore, as Hasmi (2013) suggests, the development of pragmatic competencies and the transmission of social and cultural values can also be observed in the form of family experiences.

### 1.2 Purpose of the Study

Investigating the process of how bilingual children can deal with two different language systems and emerge to become both linguistically and pragmatically competent is fascinating. Furthermore, observing first-hand how the participants of this study grow up and develop as bilinguals has inspired me to study the issues and challenges that bilingual children face every day when communicating effectively in two languages.

This investigation's purpose is to describe the most salient characteristics of how refusals and requests are made by bilingual children in both Spanish and English and to analyse whether the request and refusal realisations are appropriate in both languages.

### 1.3 Research Questions

The production of the speech acts of refusal and request is the core in the development of this case study and will be analysed from a pragmatic point of view. This investigation addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the request and refusal strategies in English and what are the request and refusal strategies in Spanish performed by two bilingual Mexican-British children aged 10 and 12?
2. How sociopragmatically appropriate are the illocutions produced by the children of this study in both languages?

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

According to the critical period hypothesis (Paradis, 2004), most children will have completed their development of grammar and syntax by the age of 5 years. However, Cekaite (2012) states that children's mastery of conversational skills takes time and that more sophisticated and advanced language skills emerge during pre-adolescence and adolescence. Such abilities facilitate the transition from child to adulthood in managing social interactions appropriately.

Several studies have been carried out concerning pragmatics, the performance of requests and refusals, and the development of pragmatic competence in bilinguals. However, most investigations have tended to focus on studying either other aspects of pragmatics in children (Groba et al., 2018), (Lam,2015); (Siegal et al., 2010), (Dupuy et al., 2018), the pragmatic skills and competence in very young bilinguals (Cekaite, 2012), (Kuang, 2007),

(Genesee et al., 1996), or research the performance of requests and refusals in adults (Rasheed, N. J. 2020), (Yazdanfar, & Bonyadi, 2016), (Stavans, & Webman Shafran, 2018).

Little research has been done on older bilingual children and preadolescents' pragmatic competence, specifically their ability to perform requests and refusals, an essential communicative feature in any language. Therefore, it is hoped that this case study may help provide further data and add to the paucity of specific research and existing literature in this field of the development of pragmatic competence and the enactment of refusal and requests in monolingual adults and bilingual children.

LoCastro (2003, p. 243) states "that every culture has characteristic speech acts that reflect its norms and values". Hence, this research can fill gaps in the field and contribute to cross-cultural pragmatics, addressing the importance of politeness conventions for bilinguals and how this knowledge will allow them to perform speech acts appropriately, more accurately reflecting their specific cultural norms. The results obtained through this investigation could raise awareness of how important the teaching and modelling of the speech acts of request and refusals are. The study also highlights the importance of developing and refining children's linguistic, communicative and pragmatic competence at a young age if they are to effectively communicate in bilingual contexts.

### 1.5 Key Terms

In this section, I intend to briefly define the key terms that will be useful to respond to the case study's research questions. The key terms are Pragmatics; Communicative Competence; Pragmatic Competence; Bilingualism; Speech Acts; Refusals, and Requests. Below, I briefly define the terms:

- Bilingualism: the use of two languages by a single person or a group of people (Moradi, 2014).

- Communicative competence: the capacity of the learner to communicate effectively with others through language (Canale & Swain cited in Birner 2013).
- Pragmatic competence comprises the intelligence that underpins the ability to use language appropriately in different situations. (Lo Castro, 2003).
- Speech act: “The action or intent that a speaker accomplishes when using language in context, the meaning of which is inferred by hearers” (Fromkin & Hyams, 2011 p. 593).
- Request: an act of respectfully or formally asking something. Requests are potentially face-threatening acts, they differ cross-linguistically in many ways, and “they are often realised by means of clearly identifiable formulas” (Ellis as cited in Pinto, 2005 p. 1).
- Refusals: face-threatening acts to convey a desire, not to (do something), often achieved by indirect strategies that necessitate a high degree of pragmatic competence (Eslami, 2010).

### 1.6 Research Organisation

There are five chapters in this thesis. The first chapter introduces the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the rationale, the research’s main topic, and the critical terms of the central notions for this investigation project.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on bilingualism, communicative competence, and pragmatic competence, followed by a review of the key proponents of politeness theory. Finally, a review of speech acts (focusing on request and refusals) will be provided.

Chapter 3 will broadly discuss the methodology used for this research project, within which its context, the participants and data collection instruments will be outlined.

Chapter 4 aims to present the results of the research. In this chapter, the transcriptions and observation notes will be analysed and results presented and described.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusions of the case study with its discussion and suggestions for further research.

# Chapter II. Literature Review

In this chapter, I will present an overview of the most significant concepts to this study.

## 2.1 Defining Bilingualism

The first step to researching bilingualism is to understand the notion of bilingualism in its social, psychological and cultural context to interpret the findings better. (Chin & Wigglesworth, 2007 p. 3). Over the years, the notion of bilingualism has changed and evolved dramatically. To start with, Mc Namara (as cited in D'Acierno, 1990 p. 6) states that bilingualism refers to people who possess minimal competence in any one of the four languages. For Bloomfield (as cited in D'Acierno, 1990 p. 7), the definition of *bilingualism* is the ability to speak two languages perfectly, "the native-like control of two languages". Bilingualism has also been defined as "complete mastery of two different languages without interference between the two linguistic processes" (Oestreicher as cited in Cummins & Swain, 2014 p. 7).

The more research is made into investigating the term 'bilingualism', the more complex it is to find a unique and accurate definition for it (Köktürk et al., 2016), (Gottardo & Grant 2008 p. 1.). Defining bilingualism remains an open problem in the area that somehow makes this topic both challenging and exciting. Some authors define *bilingualism* as taking into account the age at which the two languages have been acquired, stating that bilingualism refers only to those people who have been exposed to a second culture before puberty, who show a good balance of knowledge of both languages, who can manage the four skills and can talk to people according to the situation in which the speech act is taking place (D'Acierno, 1990 p. 9). However, Moradi (2014) claims that bilingualism is "the use of at least two languages either by an individual or by a group of speakers" p. 107. When bilingualism is described as 'knowing two languages', Gottardo and Grant (2008) argue that more issues arise by understanding what "to know" means. They, therefore, suggest that the definition of bilingualism must include the degree of proficiency levels in each language, how and when those languages were acquired

and any other language skills and subskills that set them apart. As cited in Domakani et al. (2013 p. 91), Grosjean (cited in Domakani et al.,2013, p. 91) suggests that "bilingualism should be regarded as 'a holistic system' that includes competence in two languages and not the mere sum of two linguistic systems". Thus, it could be said that for this research, bilingualism will be described as a significant phenomenon of the modern era, according to Köktürk et al. (2016), who describe bilingualism as having been brought up with two languages and being competent in using them, as well as having the ability to comprehend the interpretation of language in terms of words and meanings.

### *2.1.1 Types of Bilingualism*

As has mentioned above, there is disagreement about the definition of bilingualism. Due to its complex, social, psychological, linguistic and cultural aspects, researchers in this area propose that the phenomena of bilingualism need to be understood from a multidimensional aspect (Butler, 2013), (Chin & Wigglesworth (2007). However, it is still not possible to set clear limits between the different types of bilingualism. Several authors have suggested some types of bilingualism depending on the following criteria; age acquisition, the order of acquisition of both languages, the use of the languages, the mental organisation of both languages, the linguistic competence and the psychosocial context. Table 1 below summarises the types of bilingualism proposed by various authors, their fundamental characteristics of SLA, the dimensions under which they have been classified, and some related issues and their implications in the educational field.

**Table 1**

*Typology of Bilingualism*

| **Typology** | **Point of Focus (Dimension)** | **Characteristics of SLA** | **Possible Outcomes** | **Related Issue and Educational Implications** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Balanced<br>Dominant<br>(Peal & Lambert, | Relationship between proficiencies in two languages | Functional differences;<br>Related to age | Differences in proficiencies in L1 and L2 achieving equal level of | Conceptualizing and assessing one's language proficiency;<br>Cummins's threshold |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1962) | | factor (?) | proficiency in L2 with L1 (balanced); L2 proficiency varies but not the same as L1 (dominant) | hypothesis and interdependent hyphotesis;<br>Semilingualism |
| Compound<br>Coordinate<br>Subordinate<br>(Weinreich, 1953) | Organization of linguistic codes and meaning unit(s) | Functional differences; differences in form-meaning mapping | Differences in semantic representation and information processing for L1 and L2 | Difficulties with operationalizing distintions and testing differences |
| Early<br>Simultaneous<br>Sequential<br>Late (Genesse et al., 1978) | Age of acquisition | Maturational differences; schooling differences | Attainment of L2 proficency varies by age of acquistion; L1 proficiency is not addressed | Neurolinguistic differences (?); critical period hypothesis |
| Incipient<br>Receptive<br>Productive<br>Additive Subtractive (Lambert, 1974; 75) | Functional ability | Functional and motivational differences | Different proficiencies in L1 and L2 in different domains L2 as enrichment without loss of L1 (additive); L1 is replaced by L2 (subtractive) | Social status of individual groups and the social value of their L1 greatly influcences the retention of L1; support for literacy in L1 and L2 literacy development Support for literacy in L1 and L2 literacy development |
| Elite Folk (Fishman, 1977); Circumstantial Elective (Valdés & Figueroa, 1994) | Language & status learning environment; literacy support of lnanguage | Differences in language status & value of bilinguals | No or little additive value of first language as a language minority status (folk); additive value of second language (elite) | |
| Bicultural L1<br>Monocultural L2<br>Accultural<br>Deculturated (Hamers & Blance, 2000) | Cultural identity | Differences in acculturation process | Cultural identitiy shaped by two cultures (bicultural); identity in one culture; loss of first language culture | High bilingual competence does not necessarily coincide with dual identity |

*Source: Bhatia, T.K., & Ritchie, W.C, (2012)*

For the present research, only some definitions of the types of bilingualism will be defined. The definitions of such classifications will provide a framework to understand better and conduct the study of the speech acts of requests and refusals produced by bilingual children.

**2.1.1.1 Bilingualism Types According to the Linguistic Competence.** From the perspective of linguistic competence, there are two types of bilingualism, balanced and dominant (also called unbalanced). According to Peal and Lambert (as cited in Moradi, 2014), this distinction is based on the link between bilingual's fluency and proficiency of their both languages.

***2.1.1.1.1 Balanced Bilingualism.*** In balanced bilingualism, an individual has acquired a similar **o**r equal 'high' level of proficiency in both languages (Butler, 2013). However, the question about how proficiency is measured raises some questions and issues. For instance, Baker (2011) considers balanced bilingualism problematic because it refers to "approximately equally" fluent in various contexts in two languages.

***2.1.1.1.2 Dominant bilingualism.*** In this type of bilingualism, an individual is more proficient and competent in two languages. Bhatia and Ritchie suggest (2012, p.115) that individuals' mother tongue is stronger and used more often than their L2. Though dominance or balance bilingualism is not equally distributed for all domains and functions of language, as Lambert (as cited in Hamers et al., 2000 p.27) states, "each individual has his own dominance configuration". In the context of bilingualism, dominance refers to "observed asymmetries of skill in, or use of, one language over the other" (Birdsong, 2014, p. 374) so, individuals may process one of their languages' speech more easily than their other language, access words faster and use their dominant language more frequently on a daily basis.

### *2.1.2 Bilingualism Types According to the Age of Acquisition*

This classification includes childhood or early bilingualism, divided into simultaneous and successive bilingualism; and late bilingualism. In the discussion of these types of bilingualism, one controversial issue has been the limit point that should be used to talk about early bilingualism. Baker (2011) argues that all the different traits of individuals and the context of when and where individuals acquire a language make it difficult to distinguish the types of

childhood bilingualism. Hence, before reviewing these types of bilingualism, it is crucial to understand two notions that are often related to acquiring a second language; the critical period hypothesis and the innatist perspective.

On the one hand, the critical period hypothesis (CPH) proposes that individuals have a higher language learning ability that starts early in life (around one year of age) and that it "ends at puberty, by which time the brain loses its plasticity" (Butler, 2013 p.127). The CPH suggests that humans are genetically programmed to acquire language knowledge and skill at a specific time in life (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

On the other hand, the innatist perspective, which is related to Chomsky's theory (as cited in Lightbown & Spada, 2013 p. 20), states that "all human languages are based on some innate universal principles" p. 20. These scholars argue that children have the innate ability to discover the core rules of a language system by themselves since they are born following the samples of the natural language they are exposed to. In addition, he points out that children do not need to be taught a language because they are as biologically programmed to develop such abilities as any other biological function.

**2.1.2.1 Childhood / Early Bilingualism.** This type of bilingualism has been categorised according to the age of exposure to two (or more languages) in pre-adolescence (Beatens Beardsmore as cited in Moradi, 2014). According to Swain (as cited in Moradi, 2014), early bilingualism "manifests bilingualism as a native language". This type of bilingualism has been classified into simultaneous and successive (or sequential) bilingualism.

***2.1.2.1.1 Simultaneous Bilingualism.*** Simultaneous bilingualism develops when a child acquires two languages at the same time early in life (Baker, 2011). A vast number of studies are focused on this type of bilingualism. For instance, Moradi has researched how this type of bilingualism supports individuals to improve their linguistic abilities (Moradi, 2014). There are four basic dimensions that researchers use to understand the phenomena of simultaneous bilingualism; they are, 1) the mother tongue of the parents, 2) the choice of language from the

parents to speak to the child, 3) the other family members choice of language to the child and 4) the language in which the child experiences the community (Baker, 2011).

***2.1.2.1.2 Successive or Sequential Bilingualism.*** This type of bilingualism occurs when a child has partially acquired one language (L1) and then a second language (L2) is introduced and learnt early in childhood. McLaughlin (as cited in Baker, 2011) suggests that at approximately the age of three the languages are acquired in a more natural, informal and untutored way. Since sequential bilinguals have little or no opportunity to build receptive skills before the age of three, they learn the new language without any knowledge. Therefore they will require an environment where they will receive the appropriate input to learn the new language.

**2.1.2.2 Late Bilingualism.** Late bilingualism refers to the bilinguals who have learned their second language (L2) after the critical period, especially when L2 is learned in adolescence or adulthood. According to Moradi (2014), late bilingualism is successive bilingualism that occurs after the acquisition of L1. Late bilingualism takes advantage of the experience of individuals from learning an L1 to learning the L2.

### *2.1.3 Bilingual Types According to Cognitive Organization*

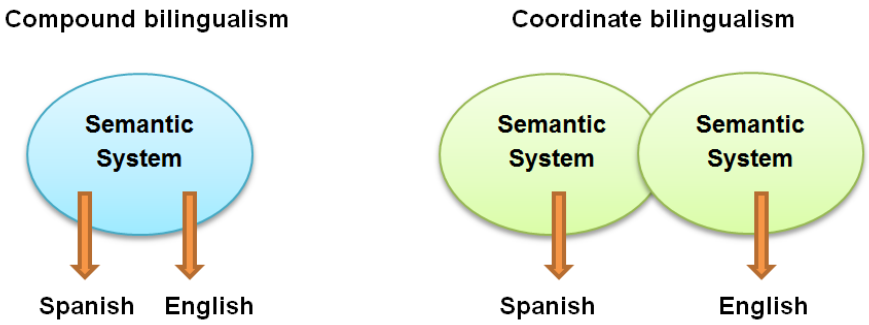
According to the cognitive organisation, bilingualism comprises 'compound bilingualism', 'coordinate bilingualism' and sub-coordinate bilingualism. These distinctions "deal with the properties of how two or more linguistic codes are organised and stored by bilingualism" (Butler, 2013, p. 112)

**2.1.3.1 Compound Bilingualism**. Two separate sets of linguistic codes are stored in one sense unit in this form of bilingualism. For example, 'dog' and 'perro' are stored as one meaning unit (Butler, 2013). In other words, an individual has one system of meaning for words used for both L1 and L2. "This was the ideal mental arrangement for a bilingual speaker: two languages perfectly integrated into a single conceptual structure with intimate connections between the languages" (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994).

**2.1.3.2 Coordinate Bilingualism.** In coordinate bilingualism, each linguistic code is stored and organised separately into two meaning units in contrast with the previously mentioned compound bilingualism. Thus, coordinate bilinguals have two systems of meanings for words, for example, one system of meaning is used for words known in the L1, and the other is for words they know in L2. (Moradi, 2014). Figure 1 (below) illustrates the difference between compound and coordinate bilingualism.

**Figure 1**

*Compound and coordinate bilinguals*




Adapted from Moradi, 2014 p. 109

**2.1.3.3 Subordinate Bilingualism.**. In subordinate bilingualism, linguistic codes of individuals in their L2 are assumed to be interpreted through their L1. Precisely, they are thought to have two sets of linguistic codes but only one sense unit, which can only be accessed via their L1 language (Moradi, 2014).

## 2.2 Definition of Communicative Competence

Before analysing the definition of communicative competence, Birner (2013) suggests clarifying the terms ‘competence’ and ‘performance’. For this scholar, competence is the ability to understand the rules of our idiolect, our own internalised, unique form and use of language that shares many similarities with the idiolects of other group members. Performance on the other hand, refers to what speakers do linguistically, including all of their hems and haws, false starts,

interrupted sentences, and speech faults, as well as their usual faulty comprehension. Birner (2013) points out that semantic meaning is a matter of competence, yet pragmatic meaning is a matter of performance at first sight. However, both pragmatic knowledge and linguistic knowledge are governed by rules. These pragmatic rules governing language production and interpretation in context are part of human linguistic competence, not just performance matters because speakers within a language community share them. Thus, speakers require not only to perform or accomplish communication but to communicate appropriately and to deal with a form of meaning that is not contained in dictionaries, that 'slippery' meaning that changes from context to context (Birner, 2013).

Communicative competence is a term proposed by Hymes (1967, 1972) that can be defined as the knowledge and the ability to communicate appropriately in a given context (Butler, 2013). This concept "does not only represent the grammatical competence but also the sociolinguistic competence" (Hymes as cited in Sabri, 2018 p. 28). That is to say, communicative competence comprises linguistic and pragmatic knowledge (LoCastro, 2013, p. 254).

For this research, the following definition is adopted since it reflects the different views in the literature since the 1960s. Communicative competence is "the ability to use language, or communicate, in a culturally appropriate manner to make meaning and accomplish social tasks with efficacy and fluency through extended interactions" (Tarvin, 2015, p. 2). In the following sections, we will look at some of the most well-known and important models of communicative competence: Hymes (1967, 1972), Canale and Swain (1980) and Bachman 1990).

### *2.2.1 Hymes' Model of Communicative Competence*

As mentioned above, Hymes coined the term communicative competence and described it as the tacit knowledge of a language and the ability to use it for communication (Hymes cited in Sabri, 2018). He suggested that knowledge of language structure and socio-cultural rules are

both related and cannot be separated. Moreover, he proposed to integrate linguistic theory with the theory of communication and culture. He raised four questions on which his framework is based; whether (and to what degree):

> something is formally possible in virtue of grammaticality
>
> something is feasible in terms of implementation available
>
> something is appropriate in the context in which it is used and evaluated
>
> something performed or done, capable of accomplishing what it entails
>
> (Hymes, as cited in Sabri, 2018 p. 303-304) (Taş & Khan 2020 p. 88).

To sum up, Hymes' communicative model emphasises both grammatical knowledge and acquiring the knowledge to communicate appropriately and effectively in a particular situation.

### *2.2.2 Canale and Swain's Model of Communicative Competence*

The model proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) is one of the most significant models of communicative competence in linguistics because it offers practical suggestions for syllabus design, instructional methodology, teacher education, and teaching materials (Taş & Khan, 2020 p.89). Canale and Swain defined *communicative competence* as a "synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge and skill needed for communication" (Sabri, 2018 p. 303). They also asserted that the interaction of grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence is essential to achieve effective communication (Tarvin, 2015 p. 4). The two components of Canale and Swaine's model are communicative ability and actual communication. (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007).

On the one hand, communicative competence (a model of knowledge) is divided into four sub-competencies:

*grammatical competence* (knowledge of linguistic features)

*sociolinguistic competence* (knowledge of contextually appropriate language use)

*discourse competence* (knowledge of how to achieve coherence and cohesion in spoken or written communication)

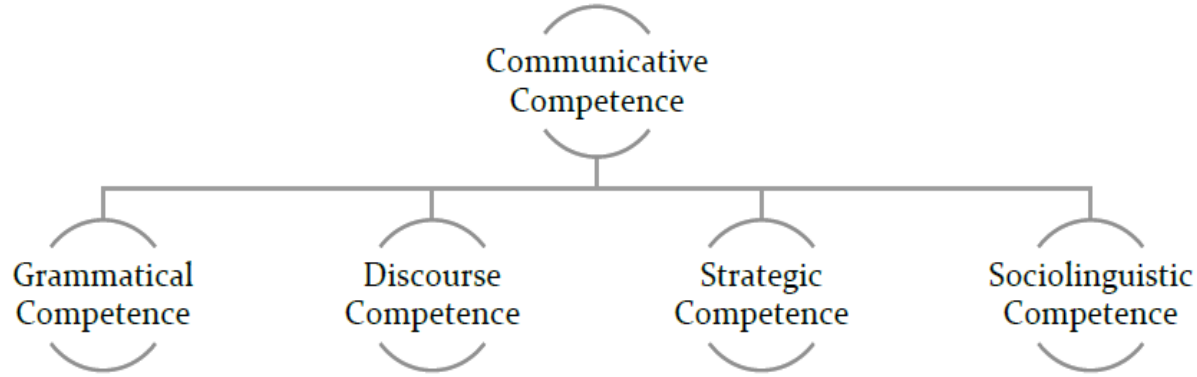
*strategic competence,* the ability to utilise communication methods to deal with breakdowns and maintain cohesiveness in oral and writing communication (Kim, 2016)

On the other hand, actual communication refers to the demonstration of knowledge in actual language performance. Canale (as cited in Sabri, 2018) added discourse competence to the

original model, which refers to linking together language structures and functions into a logical and coherent text (Sabri, 2018). Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence is represented in figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence*




Source: Taş & Khan, 2020 p.90

### *2.2.3 Bachman's Model of Communicative Competence*

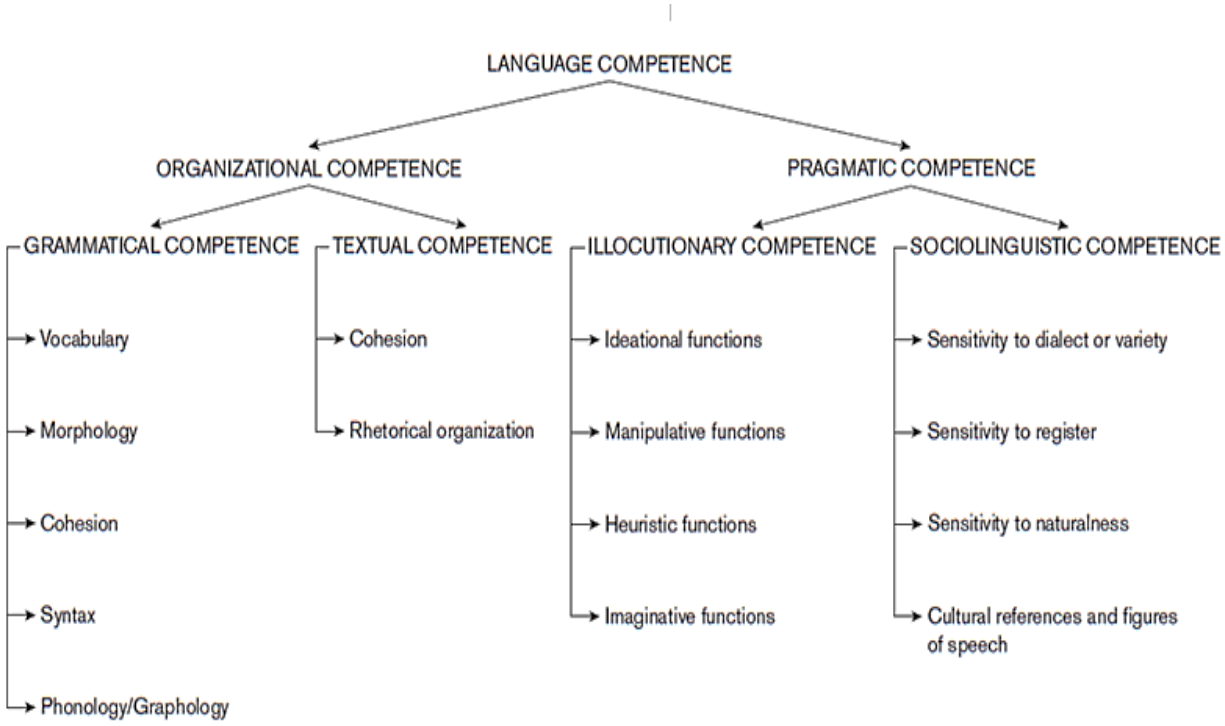
Bachman (1990) created a communication competence model that seeks to define the dimensions of communicative competence and illustrate how the processes and their components interact. In addition, Bachman distinguishes the notion of knowledge and skill, something which other models do not clarify (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007). This model "combines competence and performance under three main divisions: *language competence* (i.e. knowledge-related items), *strategic competence* (i.e. the capacity for implementing these items in communication), and *psychophysiological factors* (i.e. those mental processes affecting the actual implementation)" (Taş & Khan (2020 p. 90).

Language competence includes organisational and pragmatic competencies, as can be observed in Figure 3 (below). On the one hand, organisational competence includes those competencies involved in the production and comprehension of language (grammatical and textual abilities). On the other hand, pragmatic competence refers to the ability to perform acceptable utterances within specific contexts and the rules that determine the successful use

of language in specified contexts. Pragmatic competence is divided into two more components, illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence (Austin, 1962). Sociolinguistic competence includes distinguishing a dialect, register, naturalness and the ability to interpret cultural situations and figures of speech (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007 p. 44). Consequently, as Taş & Khan (2020) state, a speaker's communicative ability does not solely depend on one aspect of the language but "is the result of an interaction between knowing *what* and *how"* p. 91.

**Figure 3**

*Components of language competence (Bachman, 1990 p. 87)*




Source: Fulcher, & Davidson (2007)

Furthermore, (as seen in figure 3) for Bachman and Palmer (1996), communicative language ability comprises knowledge or competence and the ability to use that knowledge in a context. They classified language competence into two groups: organisational competence (grammatical and textual / rhetorical competence) and pragmatic competence (functional and sociolinguistic competence) (Kim, 2016).

**2.3 Pragmatic Competence**

Ever since Chomsky (as cited in Kecskés, 2015) made the distinction between *grammatical competence* and *pragmatic competence,* this notion has become an object of investigation in various disciplines such as linguistics, applied linguistics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, communication research, and cross-cultural studies (Taguchi, 2009). Chomsky (as cited in Tello Rueda, 2006) defined *pragmatic competence* as the "knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use (of language) in conformity with various purposes" (McConachy & Spencer-Oatey, 2020). Pragmatic competence is defined as "the ability to relate utterances to their meaning, the intention, and situational context" by Bachman (as cited in Wijayanto, 2016, p. 1).

Different models of communicative competence now included the aforementioned pragmatic competence, which was seen as an essential element for the achievement of appropriate language use in accomplishing communication goals. An example of this type of competence is Bachman's model of communicative competence (see fig 4). The model incorporates Illocutionary competence (concerning the performance of language functions) (Halliday 1973) and speech acts (Austin, 1962) (cited in Fulcher & Davidson, 2007).

Kasper and Schmidt (as cited in LoCastro, 2013) assert that pragmatic competence is that area of communicative competence in every language closely related to cognitive ability and social experience. Pragmatic competence can also be viewed as how people negotiate social meanings and impressions within interpersonal roles and relationships when building, negotiating, questioning, and often destroying relationships. (Spencer-Oatey as cited in McConachy & Spencer-Oatey, 2020).

According to Bialystok (as cited in Tello Rueda, 2006 pp. 173-174), *pragmatic competence* includes:

1) the speaker’s ability to use language for different purposes;

2) the listener's ability to get past the language and understand the speaker's real intentions; and

3) the command of the rules by which utterances come together to create discourse

More recently, Koran & Koran, 2017) defined pragmatic competence as one of the fundamental aspects to achieve effective communication, "the knowledge of the linguistic resources and the ability to use and interpret them appropriately in various contexts" p. 88. In more simple words, we talk about pragmatic competence when we refer to those skills that help to communicate and understand messages and intentions that present in conversations correctly (Koran & Koran, 2017).

Hence, the development of pragmatic competence and learning pragmatic norms is essential to become a competent user of the target language "to successfully engage in speech acts (e.g., apologising, greeting, requesting), participate in conversations and different types of discourse, and maintain interaction in complex speech events" (Kasper, as cited in Dorcheh, & Baharlooie, 2016, p.153).

**2.4 Interlanguage pragmatics**

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) can be defined as a branch of second language acquisition (SLA) that "examines second language (L2) learners' knowledge, use, and development in performing socio-cultural functions" (Taguchi, 2017, p. 1). It is argued that learners need to gain both linguistic knowledge and socio-cultural knowledge to interact and communicate in a social context in the target language. Pragmatics in the acquisition of L2 is referred to as interlanguage pragmatics, which investigates how non-native speakers comprehend and develop knowledge and ability of how to apply the pragmatic rules, norms, and practices of the target language (Kasper as cited in Kim, 2016) (Kasper & Dahl as cited in Barron, 2003).

ILP is mainly based on three theories (Kecskés, 2015): the theory of pragmatics (Grice), the politeness theory, and the interlanguage theory (Brown and Levinson). The main areas of research in ILP are pragmatic competence, speech acts, politeness and pragmatic transfer, all of which are relevant for this study. ILP has been explored in prior studies made by Kasper and Dahl (as cited in Taguchi, 2017). Previously, Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) referred to ILP as “the comprehension and production of linguistic action, including discourse regulation" p. 4. In other words ILP discusses how non-native speakers acquire, understand and produce appropriate utterances in a given context. As with other terms in linguistics and pragmatics, the definition of ILP has evolved, more recently, Schauer, (2009) has defined ILP as "one of the branches of pragmatics that discusses the acquisition, comprehension, and production of contextually appropriate language foreign or second language learners” (Schauer, 2009, p. 2). However, ILP is not a term exclusive to either the area of second language acquisition or pragmatics but both areas.

Kecskés (2015), points out that ILP is frequently associated with cross-cultural pragmatics, which emphasizes that people's pragmatic principles in one language are frequently different in another language. Therefore, he argues that it is essential to consider ILP from the point of view of second language learners or non-native speakers and take into account bilinguals and multilinguals since there is a growing interest in how speakers use different languages to observe the same pragmatic principle. Consequently, there is an elementary difference between how pragmatic competence in L1 is developed and the sequential development of bilingual pragmatic competence. Kecskés (2015) also argues that "while the former is controlled mainly by the socio-cultural environment, the latter is mostly motivated by individual will and preference" p. 419. On the one hand, while a person's L1 language and social skills develop mainly subconsciously and automatically, this process depends on the exposure to and nature of the socio-cultural environment.

By contrast, bilingual pragmatic competence depends not only on exposure to L2 and environment but also on individual control, awareness, and willingness to change abilities, behaviours, and the acquisition of social skills (Kecskés, 2015). Thus *bilingual pragmatics* is defined as "a cognitive perspective on the language use of speakers and hearers with more than one language in social encounters" (Kecskés, 2015, p. 1) (Domakani et al.,2013 p.89). ILP theory refers to creating a second language rather than a unique symbiosis of two languages, a dual language that is influenced by the complex nature and bi-directionality of transfer and the conceptual blending (Kecskés, 2006). To date, very few studies have considered the notion of bilingual pragmatics to build up a framework for conducting their research.

**2.5 Pragmatic Awareness**

This section reviews the literature related to pragmatic awareness, which is considered one of the most challenging aspects of language learning (Sadeghoghli & Niroomand, 2016 p. 27). Pragmatic awareness is regarded as "the conscious, reflective, explicit knowledge about pragmatics" (Alcón & Safont-Jordà, (2008), and refers to the type of knowledge concerned with primary and appropriate conversation rules that are used in a specific context of communication by members of a speech community. Pragmatic awareness involves the kind of knowledge that considers other aspects rather than the components of the language system itself (Falomir, 2015).

Sadeghoghli and Niroomand (2016) point out that pragmatic awareness can only be developed through interactions, which are necessary to model children's typical patterns. In addition to feedback from parents and peers, such interactions contribute to achieving the goal of pragmatic awareness: developing communicative competence (Alcón & Jordà, 2008), which helps speakers function appropriately in their social context. According to Falomir (2015), pragmatic awareness helps understand the relationship between linguistic signs and their

communicative function. It starts at around seven years, an age in which children have begun to notice that some words have multiple meanings.

For the present study, according to Kecskés (2015), bilinguals develop their conscious awareness of how one culture differs from another, the ability to convey this difference in language production and the development of a dual identity and culture. Bilinguals are also expected to have two sets of small talk, one for each of their language. Small talk or phatic communication can be understood as that speech "which is empty of informative content but serves to engage people with one another in purely social exchange" (Wang, et al., as cited in Maíz-Arévalo, 2017 p. 1). Although bilinguals are supposed to hold one set of small talk for each language, Kecskés (2015) argues that bilinguals do not have two different sets but only one blended set of small talk from two languages. Thus, in order to manage the overload of small talk competence in both languages, bilinguals require a high level of pragmatic awareness to cope with these cultural differences (Kecskés, 2015). Therefore, if bilinguals acknowledge that every culture has its preferred ways of saying and doing things (Kesckes, as cited in Maiz-Arevalo 2017) then they would avoid not only putting their interactions at risk, but also avoid transferring their cultural norms and practices from one language to another incorrectly. This can be exemplified in Mugford's study (as cited in Kecskés 2014) in which Mexican norms and practices were transferred by his students to their second language. Miller (2015,p.3) defines it as 'speech which is used to express or maintain connection with others in the form of shared feelings, good- will or general sociability, rather than to impart information exchange Miller (2015,p.3)defines it as 'speech which is used to express or maintain connection with others in the form of shared feelings, good- will or general sociability, rather than to impart information exchange Miller (2015,p.3)defines it as 'speech which is used to express or maintain connection with others in the form of shared feelings, good- will or general sociability, rather than to impart information exchange'.

In addition, regarding the development of pragmatic awareness in children, research has mainly focused on three areas: the first is related to children's awareness of message adequacy (ambiguous messages). The second area of research is concerned with the ability to monitor information for its comprehensibility and identify inconsistencies in the information they receive. The third area involves children awareness and particularly the need to accommodate or modify speech according to specific needs or demands of the context (Pratt & Nesdale, 1984).

**2.6 Politeness**

An important topic in linguistics is the notion of politeness, which embodies a series of strategies that allow speakers to create a more comfortable atmosphere to establish successful communication. Kasper (as cited in Barron, 2003 p.14) has used politeness as the "proper social conduct and tactful consideration of others" (Kasper in Barron, 2003). According to Richards and Schmidts (as cited in Sadeghoghli & Niroomand, 2016), politeness refers to how languages are used to express the social distance between speakers and their different role relationships and how speakers make an effort to establish, maintain, and save face during interactions (face-work) in a specific speech community. Thus, politeness helps to avoid potential problems in interaction between cultures (Barron, 2003). In other words, politeness is used to minimise the force of their speech acts (Al-Duleimi et al., 2016). Despite politeness being a universal concept, Guodong and Jing, (cited in Sadeghoghli & Niroomand, 2016). claim that politeness may differ depending on the culture, gender and power relations. For Félix-Brasdefer (2006) "Politeness is a form of social interaction that is conditioned by the socio-cultural norms of a particular society" p.2159. This view is supported by Reiter (as cited in Al-Duleimi et al., 2016), who states that politeness exists due to the interactions between people and their culture.

### *2.6.1 Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory*

Politeness theory, proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978), has been one of the most influential works in interlanguage pragmatic research until today. They draw our attention to explain how people are influenced by different factors when choosing politeness strategies during communication (Alabdali, 2019). For these scholars, every society and culture has its specific strategies and politeness conventions. One of the basic concepts of this theory is the notion of "face"**.** According to Brown and Levinson (cited in Félix-Brasdefer (2006), the notion of the face should be understood as the "a public self-image that every member of the [society] needs to claim for himself" p. 2160. This is supported by LoCastro (2012), who defines *face* as "an aspect of their self-image, particularly as they relate to other people" p. 201.

Two types of the face are distinguished:

- Positive face: based on the desire to be approved and accepted by others.
- Negative face: refers to the desire of speakers to be independent, respected, and proceed with freedom of action with no impositions.

Brown and Levinson's theory also proposed that some speech acts threaten other people's faces, and they can be directed to people's positive or negative faces. These speech acts are opposed to the speaker's face wants or the addressee.

### *2.6.2 Politeness Strategies*

Based on the abovementioned theory by Brown and Levinson (as cited in Koran & Koran, 2017 and Leech, 2014), there is a set of 5 politeness strategies that can be used to redress or mitigate possible threatening face speech acts. These strategies are ranked according the expected increase in the risk of a face threat (Leech, 2014). The strategies are:

1. T*he bald on record strategy*
2. *Negative politeness strategy*
3. P*ositive politeness strategy*

4. *Off record*
5. *Don't do the FTA*

First, the *bald on record strategy* is the most direct strategy that can be employed ('give me that'). Thus, this strategy carries the biggest risk of face threat since there is no attempt from the speaker to reduce threat to the hearer's face and the addressee's want of respect is usually ignored (Hartuti, 2015).

*The redress on record strategy* provides speakers with two options when they consider that redressive action is necessary. One of these options is *negative politeness strategy* 2) to use mitigation which is used by speakers to avoid or minimise the imposition of a FTA on the hearers. This strategy has the characteristic to be less direct than 'bald on record' strategy. The second option under the umbrella of the redress on record strategy is the use of *positive politeness strategy 3),* which recognises the desire, interest, and need for the listeners to be respected (Leech, 2014). As a result, it addresses positive face by demonstrating care for the faces of others. In other words, positive Politeness is to satisfy a listener's positive face (Hartuti, 2015). *The off record strategy* (4) requires speakers to make a request indirectly. It attempts to recognise and appreciate the face of the listener and it shows little or no risk to the addressee's want of respect (LoCastro, 2013). Finally, speakers can opt to *Don't do the FTA strategy (5),* when the risk of threatening the hearers' face is too high and they prefer to just avoid to do it (Hartuti, 2015).

The decision on what strategy speakers decide to use, in particular children, depends on the context that they interact in. Such decision-making requires 1) high linguistic knowledge and ability, and 2) pragmatic knowledge and ability. Children quickly learn how their speech acts can positively or negatively affect their communication and intentions with others. For example, when children want to receive something they quickly learn how to ask in a way that will provide a successful outcome. They learn how to ask appropriately according to whom they are

interacting with based on social distance, social power and the degree of the imposition enacted.

### *2.6.3 Social Distance, Power and Degree of Imposition*

Three aspects influence people's decisions on what politeness strategy to use in communication: social distance (D), relative power (P), and the rating of the imposition of an act in a specific culture (R). Speakers of all cultures, according to Brown and Levinson, observe and analyse certain things in order to adapt their conversations to the situation and, above all, to protect speakers' faces (Alabdali, 2019), (Stavans, & Webman Shafran, 2018). Thus, politeness theory is concerned with the effective implementation of face-saving strategies to sustain a conversation, protecting their and the hearers' faces (Al-Duleimi et al., 2016) (Lo Castro, 2012).

## 2.7 Speech Acts

This section presents a review of literature on speech acts. When people communicate to others, they do it through the production of utterances. However, such utterances comprise not only grammatical structures and words but also perform actions. Thus, a *speech act* can be defined as an action performed by speakers through utterances (Yule, 1996 as cited in LoCastro, 2013). Speech acts refer to "the basic notion that human beings use language to act on the world" (LoCastro, 2013, p. 60). Speech acts involve an intention on the speaker's part and inference on the part of the hearer.

Consequently, people communicate with words, but we also do things with words (Birner, 2013). In communication, people seek to use language with specific intentions. For instance, when children produce the utterance: "mum, we're thirsty!" they may intend only to inform you that they are thirsty or say they want something to drink. Children will expect a response from their mothers through what they say. They will assume that their mother will recognise their communicative intention with the help of the speech event and the circumstances surrounding the utterance Yule (cited in Bayat, 2013). People produce isolated

utterances while communicating with others and performing actions, a concept which is supported by Austin's theory of speech acts. That is to say, while people communicate, they do something and make other people do something (Bayat, 2013). Speech act theory, therefore, defines and classifies the speech acts that language speakers perform.

### *2.7.1 Types of Speech Acts*

Austin (cited in Birner, 2013 and Fogal et al., 2018) established three categories of speech acts: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. The first type, locutionary act, represents what is said, occurs when a speaker performs an utterance to convey some meaning. An illocutionary act of force refers to the intentions of the speaker while performing an utterance. Fogal et al. (2018) define it as a "conventional procedure whose performance is a matter of behaving in accordance with a collection of felicity conditions" p. 2. The speakers intend to perform the act in the above example, -Mum, we're thirsty! The act of requesting is named the illocutionary act, while the effect of this act on the addressee is the perlocutionary act; it is what is achieved through the speech act (Birner, 2013). In addition, Searle (1975) classified the functions performed by illocutionary speech acts into five general categories: representatives, directives, comissives, expressives and declaratives (Yule, 1996)

1. Representatives are speech acts to describe a state of affairs or to express the speaker's beliefs to be the case or not.

2. Directives are those speech acts that have the objective to direct someone to do something, for example, requesting, forbidding, warning or ordering.

3. Comissives are speech acts used to commit or refuse the speaker to do something, for instance, promising, vowing or pledging.

4. Expressives are speech acts used to express speakers' feelings or emotions, such as apologising, thanking, congratulating, enjoyment, among others.

5. Declarations are a unique type of speech act because they may change the status of some entity. Examples of these speech acts are naming, appointing, resigning, among others (Yazdanfar & Bonyadi, 2016).

According to Birner (2013), speech acts can be direct or indirect (Arnawa, 2016). Direct speech acts happen when a direct relationship between the structure and the function of the utterance is established. For example the utterances '*give me a few minutes'* (request) and *'no me quiero mover'* [I don't want to move] (refusal) are explicit speech acts that have the effect of expressing intent without the need to show formality or politeness when talking to a stranger.

In contrast, indirect speech acts occur when there is an indirect relationship between the structure and the function of the utterance (Oktadistio & Aziz, (2018). For example, *'Could I use the computer at four?*' (request) or *'No, mejor la proxima semana*' [No, better next week] (refusal). This thesis research examines refusals and requests that are examples of speech acts that can be performed directly or indirectly.

During language acquisition, children acquire the knowledge of how to use a set of social rules in addition to grammatical structures. This knowledge is known as communicative competence, which gives children the ability to know how to communicate appropriately. Children can interpret life and establish a general theory of acceptable speech forms (Bayat, 2013). The present study investigates the speech acts of requests and refusals, two of the most common and complex speech acts for speakers in communication.

**2.8 Request Speech Act**

The speech act of requesting is considered culturally universal. Nevertheless, researchers such as Blum-Kulka have stated that there are cross-cultural differences regarding understanding request patterns. Similarly, Brown and Levinson (1987) argued that although speakers of various languages and cultures may have access to the same range of speech acts and realisation strategies, requests may differ regarding their structures and the strategies

needed to perform them appropriately (Hammani, 2019). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), requests are FTAs because speakers impose their will on the hearer. Hence, when people request something, they may need to use a variety of strategies and modifiers that would mitigate their effect on the listener's face (Yazdanfar & Bonyadi 2016) (Cenoz, cited in Domakani et al., (2014).

### 2.8.1 Classification of Requests

Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (as cited in (Hammani, 2019) indicate that request strategy can be defined as "the essential choice of the level of directness in which the act of requesting is realised" p.11. These scholars classified the speech act of request into three levels of directness:

a) direct strategies that referred to the most direct, explicit level, such as imperatives, performatives and hedged performatives; b) conventionally indirect strategies when the speech act is performed by reference to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance; c) non-conventionally indirect strategies are implicit requests understood from the context, such as hints, these strategies make the request possible by either partial reference to object or element needed for the act to be implemented (Stavans, & Webman Shafran 2018), (Daskalovska et al., 2016). These requests strategies are divided into nine categories (see table 2).

Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) indicate that speech acts usually refer to the requester, the recipient of the request, and the action to be performed. This perspective can be a) speaker-oriented when the focus is on the role of the speaker as a requester (Can I read your research?). b) hearer-oriented when the emphasis is on the role of the hearer (could you give me some water?). c) inclusive (hearer-speaker oriented) when the speaker and the hearer are included (can we close the door?), impersonal when neither the speaker nor the hearer is included (the window needs to be closed) (Hammani, 2019).

Despite Blum-Kulka's framework being widely used for investigating requests speech acts, other frameworks such as the one developed by Trosborg (1995) are equally helpful for analysing requests.

**2.9 Refusal Speech Act**

Refusals are unpleasant answers which have the potential to offend. When a speaker refuses to do something, they invariably contradict the listener's expectations or desires (Chen et al., cited in Félix-Brasdefer, 2006). According to Beebe et al. (1990), refusals are complex speech acts in the natural conversation since their performance requires a long-negotiated sequence and involves the risk of offence. Moreover, refusals may be affected by other sociolinguistic variables, such as gender, age, level of education, power, and social distance.

Levinson (as cited in Eslami, 2010) describes refusals as complex, mitigated and indirect speech acts. They typically are conveyed by prefaces, hesitations, repairs, apologies, and accounts to avoid affecting the interpersonal relations of the interlocutors. Requests are FTAs since they threaten the requester's positive face and the refuser's negative face by opposing an action proposed by the requester. Thus, the realisation of refusals requires the use of face-saving strategies to mitigate their nature (Gass and Houck cited in Félix-Brasdefer, 2006) and a high level of pragmatic competence to perform a refusal successfully (Al-Shboul & Huwari, 2016 p. 50). Refusal strategies concern the different ways people express refusal to go against an interlocutor's expectation and facilitate effective and successful communication. (Dewi et al., 2019)

According to Searle (as cited in Felix-Brasdefer, 2006), refusals fall into the category of commissives since they force the refuser to (not) do something. Refusals are commonly produced directly or indirectly (See table 4). "A refusal is considered a direct refusal if the meaning of an utterance can be understood as refusal. Meanwhile, when an utterance implicitly contains ambiguous meaning, it belongs to indirect Refusal (Dewi et al., 2019 p. 41).

It is worth noting that negotiating a rejection may require multiple attempts at directness or indirectness and varying degrees of politeness appropriate to the situation. Furthermore, what constitutes an acceptable refusal act varies by community, and the pragmatic transition is likely to occur as learners rely on their "deeply held native values" while carrying out complex and potentially FTA such as refusals (Beebe et al., 1990).

**Table 2**

*Description of in/directness in refusals*

| Directness/Indirectness for Refusals | |
|---|---|
| Direct refusal | Indirect refusals |
| Using performative verbs (I refuse)<br>'No'<br>Negative willingness/ability (I can't/won't//I don't think so) | Statement of regret or apology (I'm sorry… / I feel terrible… excuse me)<br>Wish (I wish I could help you…)<br>Statement of alternative (maybe we can go some other time / I can do it later at home / I can't give you my notes but I can photocopy them for you instead / I'll do it next time<br>Excuse, reason, explanation (My children will be home that night / I have a headache<br>Statement of principle ( I never do business with friends)<br>Attempt to dissuade interlocutor (I won't be any fun tonight)<br>Indefinite or vague response (hedging, postponement, appearing to say 'yes' meaning 'no': I'm sure / I'll try / I'll think about it / I hope I can make it) |

Source: Stavans & Webman Shafran (2018) p.156

The application of refusal strategies is divided into three sequences: pre refusal strategy, main refusal, and post refusal strategy. According to Beebe et al. (as cited in Eslami, 2010), refusals can be seen as a series of (1) pre-refusal strategies, those strategies which are used to prepare the listener for the forthcoming refusal; (2) main refusal, which expresses the actual act

of refusing; and (3) post-refusal strategies that are used to emphasise, justify, mitigate, or conclude the refusal reply. (Eslami, 2010), (Septiany, 2013).

**Table 3**

*Classification of refusals (Beebe et al., 1990: 60–70)*

| **Strategies** | **Examples** |
|---|---|
| 1. DIRECT | *I refuse* |
| a. Performative | *I can't; I won't; I don't think so*. |
| b. Nonperformative statement | |
| i. "No" | |
| ii. Negative willingness | |
| 2. INDIRECT | *I'm sorry…; I feel terrible…* |
| a. Statement of regret | *I wish I could help you.* |
| b. Wish | *My children will be home that night; I have a headache.* |
| c. Excuse, reason, explanation | *I'd rather…; I'd prefer…* |
| d. Statement of alternative | *Why don't you ask someone else?* |
| i. I can do X instead of Y | *If you had asked me earlier, I would have…* |
| ii. Why don't you do X instead of Y | *I'll do it next time; I promise I'll… or Next time I'll…* |
| e. Set condition for future or past acceptance | *I never do business with friends* |
| f. Promise of future acceptance | *One can't be too careful.* |
| g. Statement of principle | *I won't be any fun tonight* (to refuse an invitation) |
| h. Statement of philosophy | *I can't make a living off people who just offer coffee* |
| i. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor | (Waitress to costumers who want to sit a while) |
| i. Threat/statement of negative consequences to the request | (Statement of negative felling or opinion) |
| ii. Guilt trip | *Don't worry about it; That's okay; You don't have to.* |
| iii. Criticise request/requester, etc. | *I'm trying my best; I'm doing all I can do*. |
| iv. Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request. | *Monday?* |
| v. Let interlocutor off the hook | *I'll think about it* |
| vi. Self defence | *Gee, I don't know: I'm not sure* |
| j. Acceptance that functions as a refusal | |
| i. Unspecific or indefinite reply | |
| ii. Lack of enthusiasm | |
| k. Avoidance | |

| | |
|---|---|
| i. Nonverbal | |
| –Silence | |
| –Hesitation | |
| –Do nothing | |
| –Physical departure | |
| ii. Verbal | |
| –Topic switch | |
| –Joke | |
| –Repetition of part of request | |
| –Postponement | |
| –Hedging | |
| 3. ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS | *That's a good idea; I'd love to* |
| a. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement | *I realise you are in a difficult situation* |
| b. Statement of empathy | *Uhh; well; oh; uhm* |
| c. Pause fillers | |
| d. Gratitude/appreciation | |

Source: Eslami, 2010 p. 218-219

Dewi, et al. (2019) point out that while refusals are present in all languages, refusals are not expressed in the same way by different language cultures. Like other speech acts, refusals are universal and culturally distinct, and their realisation depends on cultural norms. Refusing can be accepted or appropriate for one nationality or culture but not for another one. Thus, as Eslami (2010) claims, proper understanding and production of refusals require a certain amount of culture-specific knowledge. In addition, since refusals and other speech acts are FTA, speakers need to "integrate personal and societal values with linguistic competence and, most importantly, gain some knowledge of "face-work" and some experience using it in the L2 interaction" (Goffman, as cited in Beebe & Takahashi, 1989, p. 200). The present case study researches requests and refusals as performed by two bilingual older children. Thus, some data may emerge that indicate whether the participants transfer cultural specific politeness strategies from Spanish to English and or vice versa. To conclude, regarding the ability of children to

perform speech acts, Thomas, as cited in Stavans and Webman Shafran (2018), states that the sophisticated language faculty of the form-function interface required to learn speech acts is developed late in the first language. This research may contribute to whether the same phenomenon happens with bilingual older children.

# Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the production of requests and refusals along with the strategies used by two bilingual children and the appropriateness of these illocutions in their family context. This chapter establishes the methodological directions for qualitative pragmatic research. In this chapter, I describe the research design that best suits the research questions in this study, the research context, the participants, and the specific instruments used for data collection. I also provide a detailed description and justification of the data procedure and data analysis of this research. How the validity and reliability of the data were achieved are described as well.

## 3.1 Research Design

The approach of inquiry for this study is a qualitative case study. This investigation uses patterns of requests and refusals and includes the participant's perceptions that are better investigated through qualitative methods, according to May and Hornberger (2017). Hence, I chose a qualitative method because, according to Christensen et al. (2011), research that collects solely quantitative data often delivers an incomplete interpretation or image of the phenomena, event, or situation under investigation. Qualitative data adds another level of insight.

Cresswell and Poth (2016 p. 357) defined a *case study* as "the intensive and detailed description and analysis of one or more cases". This case can be a person, a group, an organisation, an activity, a process, or an event. Thus, a case study investigates a unique phenomenon "in-depth" within its real-world context. Bartlett and Vavrus (2016) remark that a case study is characterised by time, action, culture, and other aspects that differentiate a case and make it unique.

Yin (2018) has pointed out that conducting a case study helps comprehend a real-life issue better and believes that such an understanding will most likely include critical contextual elements relevant to the circumstance investigated. Moreover, this scholar notes that case

studies deal with the technically unique situation of having many more variables of interest than individual items of data. Therefore, a case study should rely on multiple sources of evidence, which needs to be triangulated to validate its outcome. Since this research aims to analyse the realisation of refusals and requests as performed by two bilingual children, a case study is the most suitable approach due to the children's unique characteristics and context.

**3.2 Participants and their Context**

The participants in this case study are my sons Ronaldo and Messi (their pseudonym names). They produced the requests and refusals analysed in this investigation. They are bilingual speakers of Spanish and English. They have been in contact with both languages since they were born. My husband is a native British English speaker, using a standard, Southern British accent, and I am a native Mexican Spanish speaker born in central Mexico. At home, our children would only have the chance to interact in English with their father regularly. Although my children were born and raised in Mexico, our family visits the UK biannually and has regular contact with family members from the UK via WhatsApp and video conferencing facilities like Zoom. My children speak in English and Spanish at home, and they are not forced to use either of their languages. My children speak to me more often in Spanish, but they also interact with me in English, especially when my husband is present when they forget a word or feel it is easier to share or explain something in English. My husband has communicated with our children since birth in English, promoting natural and consistent communication. As a result, my children speak exclusively in English with their father even though they acknowledge they are understood in Spanish.

The participants did not have any formal instruction of English until around the age of seven when they joined a "bilingual school" and became more aware of the differences between English and Spanish. In the city where we live, more bilingual schools teach English as a second language. Therefore, my husband prefers to buy authentic materials and readings to continue acquiring their English reading and writing skills more naturally. They were asked to

take the Cambridge test for young learners, Starters and Movers, two years ago. However, my husband motivated them to take the next level of these tests, Movers and Flyers. Their results were excellent, which for my husband and me meant that they are developing their academic skills at more or less the same pace in English. During the lockdown due to the COVID-19, my children had to attend school online. Studying from home allowed me to observe that my children participate actively in their school activities during their English lessons. Even though they could dominate the conversations or the activities, they prefer to wait for their classmates and go ahead with their work in their books. They communicate a hundred per cent in English to their teachers, but this is not the case with their classmates. So, overall they use more Spanish than English at school. Table 4 shows some characteristics of the children in more detail.

***Table 4***

*Participants characteristics and background*

| | **Participant 1** | **Participant 2** |
|---|---|---|
| | Ronaldo (oldest child) | Messi (youngest child) |
| Birthplace | Puebla, Mexico | Puebla, Mexico |
| Age at the time of data collection (2021) | 12 | 10 |
| Gender | Male | Male |
| **Acquisition conditions** | | |
| Type of bilingual | Simultaneous bilingual<br>Early age bilingual | Simultaneous bilingual<br>Early age bilingual |
| Personality | Outgoing, social, friendly, calm | Outgoing, independent, serious, argumentative |
| Interests and hobbies | Sports (football, swimming, cycling), technology, science (physics), video games, cooking | Sports (football, swimming, skateboarding, cycling) music (violin and drums) video games |

This investigation took place in the home context. Therefore, my husband and I took the role of participant-observers. As Tavakoli (2012) asserts, participant observation helps comprehend a phenomenon through the eyes of those experiencing it. Since this is a case study, participant observation was beneficial to provide a detailed description of what I observed during the research process. The intention that my husband and I were participant observers was to collect the data more naturally and increase the validity and quality of observational data, as suggested by Bartlett and Vavrus (2016). Being a participant observer research allowed me to observe my family activities of daily life and share my point of view through this investigation.

**3.3 Data Collection Instruments**

The data for this study were obtained through four main instruments: The first one was a situational instrument designed to elicit the production of the speech acts of requests and refusals in English and Spanish (See appendix 1 and 2). Second a journal, third a retrospective interview to explore and analyse the participants' opinion related to the appropriateness of their performance of requests and refusals speech acts and its importance for communication. Third, a Likert scale to assess the appropriateness of the speech acts that three native speakers answered. Finally, there was a retrospective interview to explore and analyse the participants' opinions on the appropriateness of their performance of requests and refusals speech acts and their importance for communication. Cresswell (2009) recommends using as many sources as possible to collect information as they strongly complement each other. More importantly, they construct both internal and external validity, reliability and provide high quality to the case study.

***3.3.1 The Situational Instrument for Requests and Refusals***

These instruments contained some situations to elicit the realisation of requests and refusals in English and Spanish. Those situations were designed considering the age of my children and their context. These instruments included possible interactions with strangers, acquaintances, and family members. The instrument to trigger requests originally contained eight situations. However, three more spontaneous situations were added to the instrument as I

observed other moments when the children often requested something and could collect more natural data. Similar to the situational request instrument, the instrument for refusals had the purpose of motivating my children to do something. Therefore, they would likely refuse to do it. For example, the 7th situation in the instrument proposes that children are asked to go out with mum or dad to do the shopping straight after school when they are probably tired.

These instruments were used to collect data for a sociolinguistic analysis; therefore, the variables of power and distance were included when determining speech act production. Distance considered two values: those who knew each other (-) and those who did not (+). In addition, social power took into account two other parameters: status equal (=) and speaker dominating (+) (Halenko & Flores-Salgado, 2019). Table 5 summarises how each situation differed according to social power and social distance and an example of the speech act produced.

**Table 5**

*Variation in situations*

| **Speech act** | **Situation** | **Social power** | **Social distance** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Request | Friend / Playing online videogames | = | - |
| Request | Mum / Cooking pancakes | + | - |
| Request | Sales assistant / Shopping | = | + |
| Request | Mum and dad / Treats | + | - |
| Request | Dad / Pets | + | - |
| Request | Uncle (UK) / A little favour | + | - |
| Request | Teacher / Break or ask for information | + | - |
| Request | Aunt (Mex) / A little favour | + | - |
| Request | Dad /Building a stadium model | + | - |
| Request | Brother / Making / creating materials | = | - |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Request | Request to their teachers | + | - |
| Refusal | Brother / To change the TV channel | = | - |
| Refusal | Parents / Bedtime | + | - |
| Refusal | Dad / Washing the dishes | + | - |
| Refusal | Dad / Stop using the computer when they are playing online | + | - |
| Refusal | Mum / favour for aunty | + | - |
| Refusal | Mum / making their beds | + | - |
| Refusal | Parents / Cleaning up and feed their pets | + | - |
| Refusal | Mum / Going shopping | + | - |
| Refusal | Dad / Going for a walk | + | - |
| Refusal | Parents / Favour for mum or dad | + | - |

### *3.3.2 Retrospective Interview*

The retrospective interview contained seven questions used as a guide to conduct an informal and unstructured interview with my children. The primary purpose of this instrument was to gather information regarding their perception of politeness, appropriateness, directness, selection of language and linguistic resources, among other aspects. This instrument allowed me to know the children's opinions on their production of requests and refusals and their appropriateness in different contexts.

I used the data from this instrument to complement and triangulate the findings of this study.

### *3.3.3 Journal*

A journal was used to note any observations related to the production of the requests and refusals, the context in which they were produced and other relevant information for the study, for example, when the children prefer not to perform FTA to avoid pragmatic failure. The

journal was handy when I was observing and wanted to make notes about the context that conversations took place in. I also used the journal to record spontaneous interactions that were not triggered by the instruments.

**3.4 Data Collection Procedure**

The data collection for this study mainly involved my children producing requests and refusals in English and Spanish and being informally interviewed. The steps that I follow for this process is described next:

1. I informed my children about the research project, and I asked them for their participation. I also explained that sometimes they would be recorded and obtained their verbal consent.

2. I started a journal to record my observations and my children's spontaneous production of requests and refusals. I noted who participated in the interactions and discreetly wrote the literal utterances produced.

3. The situations that comprise the data collection instruments were used in English and Spanish on separate occasions by my husband or me when we felt it was possible. I was interested in collecting data at different moments: a) when both children were present, b) when only Ronaldo was present b) when only Messi was present. This procedure had the intention to focus on the interactions of both participants when they were together and to focus on each participant individually to observe and record their particular way to perform the speech acts of requests and refusals. The conversations were recorded and labelled according to the situation presented.

4. I collected the data over approximately ten weeks. However, the recordings were not taken in consecutive weeks. The participants did not produce artificial or rehearsed requests or refusals, and the children did not feel uncomfortable by being observed all the time. During this

time, I made sure that the children behaved in the way they usually do, and therefore I mostly kept the naturalness of the setting that I wanted when obtaining the data.

5. I reviewed the recordings and selected those that contained either requests or refusals for their transcription. Once I obtained the transcriptions, they were classified into the following categories: request in English, request in Spanish, refusals in English and refusals in Spanish and integrated into a database. The database included both data collected from the instruments designed and collected in a more natural and less controlled way from the journal. This combination of data enriches this study, provides a better picture of the interactions in natural settings and accounts for more spontaneous data for triangulation purposes.

6. I stopped collecting data once I had sufficient requests and refusals (minimum of 100) in English and Spanish.

7. For the retrospective interview, I often asked the children for their opinion of their production of speech acts immediately after they were recorded. However, after I completed the database, I showed it to them. I conducted the interview informally to explore their pragmatic competence, directness, appropriateness, choice of language, among other aspects. The interview was recorded and transcribed.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

The data in this study were passed through two forms of analysis: pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. The data base was comprised of 458 request and refusal speech acts, all of which were recorded, transcribed and classified.

#### 3.5.1 Pragmalinguistic and Sociopragmatic Analysis

On the one hand, the pragmalinguistic analysis allowed me to learn about my participants' choices and linguistic resources when performing the request and refusal speech acts. To do so, I used the request framework proposed by Trosborg (1995) and Beebe et al. (1990) taxonomy for refusals. After the interactions were transcribed, I separated and organised

the speech acts into an excel sheet. Then, based on the taxonomies mentioned above, I classified the speech acts into different strategies (see "coding" section in this chapter). Following the data analysis, I calculated the frequency and percentage of strategy use.

On the other hand, as Alzeebaree and Yavuz (2017) state, speech acts reflect the culture and social norms. Due to the characteristics of this study, a sociopragmatic analysis was required to complement the data for this study. Undoubtedly, these variables influence how my children communicated in the various situations I used to collect data and let me know whether the speech acts from this study were appropriate for the British and the Mexican culture. For analysis, "appropriateness" can be defined as " the knowledge of the conventions of communication in a society, as well as linguistic abilities that enable learners to communicate successfully in L2" (Taguchi as cited in Halenko & Flores-Salgado, 2019 p. 12).

### *3.5.2 Coding*

The coding system I used for the pragmalinguistic data analysis of this thesis is based on two taxonomies. Firstly, the taxonomy for Requests was suggested by Flores-Salgado (2013), who included the following main groups of requests depending on their directness level, each with their sub-categories: 1) Direct requests, that comprise imperatives, obligations, performatives, wishes, and desires or needs. 2) Conventionally indirect requests with the sub-categories of ability, willingness, suggestory formulae, and 3) indirect request that includes hints

Secondly, I used the classification of Beebe et al. (1999) for refusals. These scholars classified requests as follows: 1) Direct strategies subdivided in flat "No", 'negation of a proposition', 'negative ability'. 2) Indirect strategies include mitigated refusals, explanations, indefinite reply, promise to comply, regret or apology, alternative, postponement, set condition for future acceptance, request for additional information. 3) Adjuncts comprising positive opinion, willingness, gratitude, empathy, request for clarification and agreement.

Both taxonomies, including examples of each strategy, can be seen in the section of 'Appendices'.

### 3.5.3 Data Validity

To ensure the data and results presented in this study are reliable and objective, I invited three native speakers to contribute to the inquiry. They were one Spanish speaker from central Mexico and two English speakers from the Midlands in England whose role was to classify about fifty per cent of the request and refusal strategies in the database according to the taxonomies described above. They agreed to participate, and they were "trained" to use the classifications of the speech acts. Moreover, the native speakers also shared their perceptions regarding the appropriateness of the speech acts of requests and refusals produced by the bilingual children according to their respective countries' social and cultural conventions. They rated the speech acts appropriateness in the database considering the social variables of power, the distance between the participants in the interaction, and the cost of imposition of the speech acts. They used a Likert scale with the following criteria: totally inappropriate = 1, inappropriate = 2, neutral = 3, appropriate = 4 and totally appropriate = 5. I believe the participation of the native speakers was essential to my inquiry to guarantee that my personal opinions and beliefs did not influence the observation and interpretation of the data.

## 3.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I provided the theoretical and procedural directions of the research strategy to help readers comprehend the study's technique**.** These guidelines were in line with the pragmatic approach taken in this qualitative study, which included a sociolinguistic and sociopragmatic analysis of speech acts produced by children in Spanish and English. The next chapter provides a detailed description of the findings from the analysis of the data.

## Chapter IV: Results

This thesis investigates the performance of requests and refusals in Spanish and English produced by two bilingual children and whether their speech acts were appropriate in both languages. In this chapter, the analysis of the data collection is presented. The results are organised into two sections based on the two research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis. Firstly, the findings of the pragmalinguistic analysis is explained and secondly, the participants' perceptions regarding the production of requests and refusals and their explanations for their choices are presented. In this investigation the participants are identified as Ronaldo and Messi to protect their identity.

### 4.1 Pragmalinguistic Analysis Of Requests And Refusals

This section focuses on analysing 463 speech acts obtained during ten weeks. It is worth mentioning that most of these interactions occurred in the family context, where children mostly interacted with their parents. As seen in Table 6, 207 interactions in English and Spanish were examined, 116 for requests and 91 for refusals. From the total of speech acts collected, there were 220 requests, 108 in English and 112 in Spanish. In comparison, 243 refusals were collected, divided into 140 refusals in English and 103 in Spanish. As it can be observed in Table 6, a more significant number of refusals than requests were obtained.

**Table 6**

*Number of situations and speech acts analysed*

| | Nº of Interactions | Nº of Requests | Nº of Interactions | Nº of Refusals |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **English** | 60 | 108 | 54 | 140 |
| **Spanish** | 56 | 112 | 37 | 103 |
| **Total** | 116 | 220 | 91 | 243 |

Xiaoning (2017) considers that numerous aspects influence the selection of speech acts strategy. The level of directness was taken into account, for the analysis of the requests and

refusals. Social power, social distance, and the degree of imposition of the FTA were also examined.

### *4.1.1 Request Speech Act*

Requests are called directives speech acts because their aim is to persuade the listener to do something (Xiaoning, 2017). In this subsection, the request strategies in English and Spanish used by the participants are explained. Requests were grouped into three main categories: 1) direct strategies, 2) conventionally indirect strategies, and 3) indirect strategy (hints). These strategies were subdivided into nine different subcategories. Table 7 shows the distribution of the requests in English and Spanish in terms of directness.

**Table 7**

*Request strategies*

| Strategy | English Requests | | Spanish Requests | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| **Direct** | 51 | 47% | 59 | 54% |
| **Conventionally indirect** | 44 | 41% | 41 | 38% |
| **Non-conventionally Indirect** | 13 | 12% | 9 | 8% |
| **Total** | 108 | 100% | 109 | 100% |

As can be seen in Table 7, participants used more direct strategies than indirect and hint strategies in both languages. From a total of 108 English requests, 47% (51) correspond to direct speech acts, 41% (44) to indirect and 12% (13) to hints. On the other hand, 109 requests were produced in Spanish. 54% (59) were direct strategies, 38% (41) indirect, and only 8% (9) were classified as hints. Overall, it can be observed that even though the number of requests in English and Spanish analysed was relatively the same (108 and 109), the participants used a lower percentage of direct strategies in English than in Spanish. The data obtained suggest that

the participants of this study possess the knowledge and skills to perform requests with different degrees of directness. For instance, one of the participants tried to save his and the hearer's face by performing a pre-request to soften this FTA in number 1) providing a reason before explicitly requesting with an imperative. Examples 3 and 4) illustrate conventionally indirect strategies. Both utterances use grammatical forms that help to reduce the effect of a FTA on the hearer. Finally, the participants' kinds of 'hints' produced are illustrated with examples 5) and 6).

**Table 8**

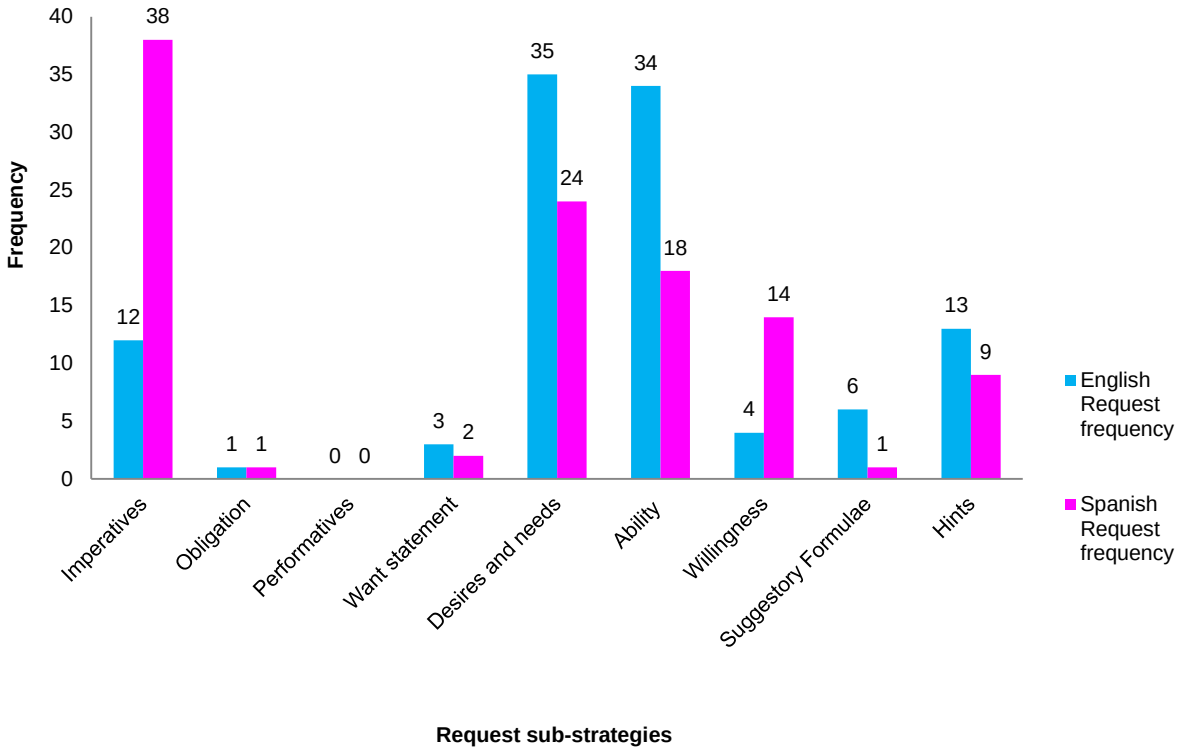
Usage frequency (%) of request strategies in English and Spanish

| **Strategy** | **English Request** | | **Spanish Request** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Frequency** | **%** | **Frequency** | **%** |
| **Direct** | | | | |
| Imperatives | 12 | 11% | 38 | 35% |
| Obligation | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% |
| Performatives | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Want statement | 3 | 3% | 2 | 2% |
| Desires and needs | 35 | 32% | 24 | 22% |
| **Conventionally indirect** | | | | |
| Ability | 34 | 31% | 18 | 17% |
| Willingness | 4 | 4% | 14 | 13% |
| Suggestory formulae | 6 | 6% | 1 | 1% |
| **Non-Conventionally Indirect** | | | | |
| Hint | 13 | 12% | 9 | 8% |
| **Total** | 108 | 100% | 109 | 100% |

Table 8 and Figure 4 show that the most commonly used sub-strategy in English was the 'Desires and needs with 32 % (35) followed in second by 'Ability' 31% (34) and in third place by 'hints' 12% (13). In contrast, the 'imperatives' was the most employed sub-strategy in Spanish, 35% (38) followed by 'Desires and needs' 21% (23) and 17% (18) ‘Ability’. Although the children used different sub-strategies, the data revealed that direct strategies were the most preferred category with the highest frequency used in both languages.

**Figure 4**

*Usage frequency of request strategies in English and Spanish*




Graph 1 shows the frequency of the request strategies in English and Spanish. The participants' most frequent choices can be observed as well as the least popular ones. For instance, 'obligation' 1% (1) in both languages, willingness in Spanish 1% (1) were the strategies less used together with the ‘performatives’, which were unused in English or Spanish.

**4.1.1.1 Direct Request Sub-Strategies.** As shown in Table 8, direct strategies for requests were divided into five sub-strategies; 'Imperatives', 'Obligation', 'Performatives', 'Want statement' and 'Desires and needs'. The most common direct sub-strategies in English were 'Desire and needs' 32% (35). Yet in Spanish, the category 'Imperatives' 35% (38) was the most popular choice. The examples below illustrate the most predominant direct strategies in English and in Spanish produced by the participants.

Situation: Ronaldo requests money from his uncle from England

1. I feel awkward… So, basically I need money.. not like a lot of money, just 20 or 30 pounds... and it's fine if you say no. It's just to pay someone to recover the audios. (Ronaldo)

Situation: Messi requests his mother to look for a coin he lost

2. Ma, creo que loosee (sic) como 5 pesos. Necesito que me ayudes (Messi)

[Mum, I think I lost about 5 pesos. I need you to help me]

Situation: Ronaldo requests his brother to help him to do his laces

3. I've just put my gloves on, hurry up! (Ronaldo)

Situation: Messi requests his friend to copy a code for a video game

4. Manuel copia lo que te puse (Messi)

[Manuel, copy what I typed to you]

Examples 1) and 3) illustrate the way the participants gave an order using the 'desires and needs' and 'imperative' strategies. Examples 2) and 4) illustrate the same strategies but performed in Spanish. In both languages the participants communicate directly. The explanation for the use of such strategies is mainly linked to the close social relationship that exists between the participants and the participants' perceptions of social power over the hearer.

**4.1.1.2 Conventionally Indirect Sub-Strategies.** Table 8 shows that the conventionally indirect requests in English were mainly produced by the 'Ability' sub-strategy 31% (34) followed by 'Suggestory formulae 6% (6) and in last place ' willingness' with only 4% (4). With respect to Spanish, the participants preferred the use of 'Ability' as their first choice with 17% (18), followed

by ‘Willingness’ with 13% (14), and as the last option ‘Suggestory formulae’ with only 1% (1). Examples of these sub-strategies in English and Spanish are presented below:

Situation: Messi asks for money to his aunt from England.

5. Hmm, well, hum I’ve been like playing the same violin for like one year. So it has gotten a little small for me so I was wondering If you could, if I can borrow money to buy another one. (Messi)

Situation: Ronaldo asks his mother if they could play video games

6. Mum asked us to make our beds. We've done it. Can we play video games please? (Ronaldo)

Situation: Messi requests some information to his violin teacher

7. ¿Miss, me puede dar las notas de 'Andantino'?

[Miss, can you give me the (musical) notes of ‘Andantino?] (Messi)

Situation: Ronaldo requests his mother something to eat

8. Ma, ¿también puedo tener un pan de chimichurri? (Ronaldo)

[Mum, can I also have a chimichurri bread?]

The data obtained for conventionally indirect strategies suggests that the participants are aware of the social power, social distance and the degree of the impositions of their requests. Therefore they use more sophisticated linguistic resources to perform requests when they produce this speech act more directly.

**4.1.1.3 Non-Conventionally Indirect.** Non-conventionally indirect strategies were underused in English and Spanish by the participants in comparison to direct and conventionally indirect strategies. The examples below illustrate the use of these Non-conventionally indirect strategies.

Situation: Ronaldo requested his mother if he could have some food

9. Is it ready? (Ronaldo)

Situation: Ronaldo asks to his mother for some more carrots to eat

10. Estaban buenas las zanahorias.

[The carrots were good] (Ronaldo)

Examples 9 and 10 illustrate Ronaldo's intentions of performing his requests indirectly. The participant succeeded in producing these speech acts, which means that he has sufficient pragmatic knowledge to perform such requests by using hints.

**4.1.1.4 Supportive Moves**. *Supportive Moves* are optional strategies to make a request to reduce or increase the force of the speech act (LoCastro, 2013). Supportive moves are relevant for communication because they help mitigate any adverse effects of a direct request, therefore avoiding pragmatic failure and assisting speakers to achieve their communication goals. For the classification and analysis of requests, the procedure employed was the one suggested by Flores-Salgado (2011), which consists of identifying the head act of the request sequence, isolating it and then disregarding those parts that are not essential to performing the speech act. Those parts can be either through alerts and/or supportive moves that can go before or after the head act.

**Table 9**

*Frequency % of supportive moves for English requests*

| **Types of supportive moves** | **English** | | **Spanish** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| **Preparator** | 21 | 30% | 16 | 30% |
| **Supportive reason** | 34 | 49% | 26 | 48% |
| **Disarmer** | 5 | 7% | 2 | 4% |
| **Cost minimizing** | 3 | 4% | 5 | 9% |
| **Promise** | 6 | 9% | 5 | 9% |
| **Total** | 69 | 100% | 54 | 100% |

Table 9 shows that participants preferred supportive reasons to modify the request head act 49% (34). 'Preparators' followed these types of supportive moves with 30% (21) out of a total of 69 that were identified in English. The data in Spanish revealed that the participants' used the same type of supportive moves in first and second place. Supportive reasons 48% (26) and 'Preparators' 30% (16). The participants often seemed to require a series of manoeuvres to produce their requests. In one of the situations recorded, Ronaldo needed to request some money from his grandfather in which the head act is supported by several external discursive techniques, namely 'Supportive reasons', 'Preparators', 'Disarmers' and 'Cost minimising', as shown in the dialogue below.

**Dialogue 1**

| | |
|---|---|
| Messi: | Hello grandpa |
| Grandpa: | Hello Messi, how are you doing? |
| Messi: | good, yeah I'm OK |
| Grandpa: | Okay how are you? |
| Messi: | Me too, uhm I don't feel comfortable like.. you know that I play the |
| Grandpa: | violin right? |
| Messi: | Your violin? right |
| | Um, well, er I've been like playing the violin, the same violin for like one year. So it has gotten like a little small for me so I was |
| Granpa: | wondering *if you could, if I can* borrow money to buy another one, |
| Messi: | A new one? Yeah, I could, yeah how much money do you want? |
| | I don't know actually. Maybe 50? just 50 quid |

In the previous interaction, between the participant and his grandfather, Messi did not make his request straightaway, instead he rather used a disarmer *"…uhm I don't feel comfortable like*..", and a preparatory "*you know that I play the violin, right?* before performing

his request. He continued using a supportive reason "*… Um, well, er I've been like playing the violin, the same violin for like one year. So it has gotten like a little small for me".* Then, for the head act "*I was wondering if you could, if I can borrow money"* Messi chose to make the request by using a conventionally indirect strategy. Finally, he decided to use a politeness marker *"maybe"* and a cost minimiser *"just 50 quid"* to mitigate the request. In this dialogue there is evidence of the participant's politeness awareness and the possible effect of his request: he therefore opted to use his linguistic knowledge and resources to perform the imposition.

### *4.1.2 Refusal Speech Act*

As Kreishan (2018) indicated, "a refusal is a dispreferred response that contradicts the expectations of interlocutors" p. 69. This type of speech act refers to a potential threat to the hearer's face. Therefore, the participants of this case study were required to use a high degree of pragmatic competence to perform this speech act appropriately. Similarly, with request strategies, the refusals were grouped into three main categories: 1) Direct, 2) Indirect and 3) Adjuncts.

**Table 10**

*Refusal speech acts*

| Strategy | English Refusals | | Spanish Refusals | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| **Direct** | 22 | 16% | 40 | 39% |
| **Indirect** | 104 | 74% | 59 | 57% |
| **Adjuncts** | 14 | 10% | 4 | 4% |
| **Total** | 140 | 100% | 103 | 100% |

Table 10 (above) shows the distribution of the strategies used by the children according to the level of directness. In English, the direct strategies represented 16% (22), indirect 74% (104) and adjuncts only 10% (14). In Spanish, the participants produced 39% (40) direct

refusals, 57% (59) indirect and adjuncts only 4% (4). As can be noticed, children preferred indirect strategies over direct and adjuncts to perform refusals. Table 11 (below) shows the direct and indirect sub-strategies.

**Table 11**

*Usage frequency (%) of refusal strategies in English and Spanish*

| **Strategy** | **English Refusals** | | **Spanish Refusals** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Frequency** | **%** | **Frequency** | **%** |
| **Direct** | | | | |
| Flat 'No' | 13 | 9% | 22 | 21% |
| Negation of a proposition | 9 | 6% | 15 | 15% |
| Negative ability | 0 | 0% | 3 | 3% |
| **Indirect** | | | | |
| Mitigated refusal | 4 | 3% | 3 | 3% |
| Reason/Explanations | 47 | 34% | 21 | 20% |
| Indefinite reply | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% |
| Promise to comply | 3 | 2% | 1 | 1% |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regret / Apology | 1 | 1% | 0 | 0% |
| Alternative | 29 | 21% | 11 | 11% |
| Postponement | 4 | 3% | 8 | 8% |
| Set condition for future acceptance | 3 | 2% | 4 | 4% |
| Request for additional information | 12 | 9% | 10 | 10% |
| **Adjuncts** | | | | |
| Positive opinion | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Willingness | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Gratitude | 1 | 1% | 0 | 0% |
| Empathy | 1 | 1% | 0 | 0% |
| Request for clarification | 10 | 7% | 3 | 3% |
| Agreement | 2 | 1% | 1 | 1% |
| Total | 140 | 100% | 103 | 100% |

**Figure 5**

*Usage frequency of refusal strategies in English and Spanish*

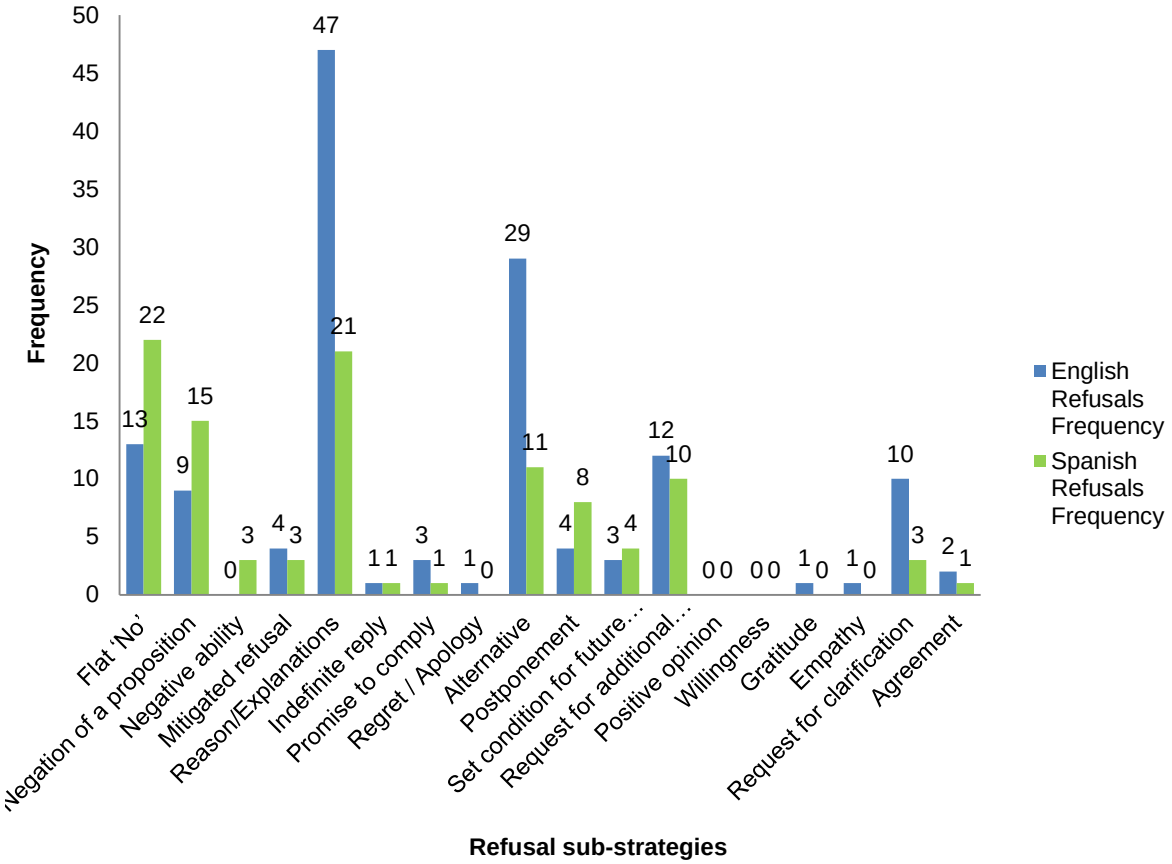



Table 11 and figure 5 (above) reveal that participants used 15 different refusal sub-strategies in English, and 13 in Spanish. The most commonly used sub-strategy in English was 'providing a reason or explanation' with a frequency of 34% (47) in comparison to the 'flat no' sub-strategy when used as the participant's first choice in Spanish with 21% (22). Although the children seem to favour the direct sub-strategies, the second most commonly used one in Spanish was the 'reason or explanation' with 20% (21).

#### 4.1.2.1 Direct Refusal Sub-Strategies

Table 11 (above) shows that the most common direct sub-strategy was a flat 'No' with 9% (13) for English and 21% (22) for Spanish. In second place was 'Negation of a proposition', with 6% (9) and 15% (15) in English and Spanish accordingly. A possible explanation for the

results in Spanish is the combination of factors in which the refusals were collected. Factors such as, the age of the participants, their gender, their personality, the close relationship between the speakers and the hearers, the variety of situations used in the instrument, the home context and the time when the speech acts were performed affected the participants strategies' selection as well what semantic formulae to use. The least common sub-strategy was 'Negative ability' in both languages. The examples below illustrate some situations when a 'Flat no' and 'Negation of a preposition strategies were recorded.

Situation: Father requests Messi to stop playing and go to bed.

11. No! (Messi)

Situation: Mother suggests Messi to have a haircut (Interaction in Spanish)

12. No (Messi)

Situation: Mum proposed to study during holidays to go ahead in school

13. I absolutely don't want to do homework in the holidays (Ronaldo)

Situation: Mother requested Ronaldo to take shower

14. No me quiero bañar ma (Ronaldo)

[I don't want to bathe mum]

In examples 11) and 12) Messi decided to make explicit his refusals by replying with a 'flat no', with the interactions recorded in both English and Spanish. Examples 13) and 14) illustrate 'Negation of a preposition strategy' when Ronaldo directly refused a suggestion and request.

**4.1.2.2 Indirect Refusal Sub-Strategies**. The most frequently used indirect refusal sub-strategies was the 'reasons or explanations' strategy in both languages, with 34% (47) in English and 20% (21) in Spanish. These results were followed by 'alternative' with 21% (29) and 17% (11) English and Spanish respectively. The other indirect sub-strategies did not show a significant frequency use except for a request for additional information in English 9% (12) and 10% (10) in Spanish. The third most frequent sub-strategy in Spanish was 'Postponement' 8%

(8). The examples below illustrate the range of sub-strategies used by the participants in their family context:

Situation: Mum requested Ronaldo to feed his pet animals

15. Mmm.. It's too cold now. They're probably sleeping. (Ronaldo)

Situation: Messi refused to lend his football to a friend

16. No te lo puedo prestar hoy, no te lo puedes llevar a tu casa. Lo puedes usar pero cuando termine la clase ya me voy a mi casa ya me lo das. Es que es mío, no te lo puedes quedar. (Messi)

[I can't lend it (the football) to you today, you can't take it home. You can use it but when the class is over I'm going to go home and you give it to me. It's because it's mine, you can't keep it.] (Messi)

Situation: Ronaldo's father requested him to come together to the town since he cannot stay on his own at home

17. Nah…let's wait another 15 minutes, then if she (mum) doesn't show up then we can go

Situation: Mum requested Ronaldo to feed his animal pets

18. I'll feed them in the morning I promise. First thing in the morning

The results obtained lend support to Félix-Brasdefer's (2010) findings that 'Giving reason and explanation' is typical for performing refusal strategies. Even though Messi, in example 16, first refuses to lend his football directly, he then refuses again but provides an 'explanation' to mitigate the impact of this FTA. This reaction possibly demonstrates that the participant acknowledges the effect of a direct refusal on the hearer and therefore empathises with the speaker, communicating his ideas more effectively and avoiding pragmatic failure. There is also evidence that he can perform this type of sequence considering social power and social distance. Even in a symmetric relationship, Messi decided to use a good degree of politeness with his friend. Similar to this (see example 18 above), Ronaldo refused to feed his pet animals

using the indirect sub-strategy of 'promise to comply' to soften the illocutionary force of his refusal.

**4.1.2.3 Adjuncts.** Regarding adjuncts, the participants adopted these types of moves to mitigate their refusals. It is worth pointing out that they only used 'gratitude', ‘empathy', agreement and ‘request for clarification. The most preferred sub-strategy for both of their languages was 'request for clarification', with the highest frequency 7% (10) in English and 3% (3) in Spanish. The examples below illustrate this strategy:

Situation: Dad invites Ronaldo to go to the shopping mall

1. Do we have to walk?

Situation: Mum asks Ronaldo to wash the dishes

2. No, ¿a poco me toca hoy?

[No, is it my turn?]

In examples 19) and 20) the participants made their refusals in an indirect way. Rather than declining the invitation and refusing to wash the dishes directly, the participants softened their refusal by requesting further clarification.

### 4.2 Socio-Pragmatic Analysis of Requests And Refusals

Three native speakers, one Mexican and two British determined the appropriateness of the speech acts from a socio-pragmatic standpoint, considering the social power, social distance and the degree of imposition of the requests and refusals produced by the bilingual children. *Appropriateness* is defined as "the knowledge of the conventions of communication in a society, as well as linguistic and abilities that enable learners to communicate successfully" (Taguchi, 2006, p. 513). Additionally, the native speakers assessed the appropriateness of the speech acts according to their culture and the home context of the participants. They judged the appropriateness of the requests and refusals on a 5-point Likert scale, with one (1) indicating "Totally inappropriate" and five (5) meaning "Totally appropriate".

### 4.2.1 English Speech Acts

**Table 12**

*Appropriateness of requests in English*

| | English requests | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **Totally inappropriate** | 1 | 2 % |
| **2** | | 3 | 6 % |
| **3** | | 8 | 15 % |
| **4** | | 12 | 23 % |
| **5** | **Totally appropriate** | 28 | 54 % |
| | **Total** | 52 | 100% |

Table 12 shows the appropriateness ratings made by the two British native speakers. They assessed 52 speech acts, approximately 50 per cent of the database. For requests, the English native speakers indicated that 54 % % (28) speech acts were 'Totally appropriate' (scale 5) and 23 % (12) rated as scale 4. On the other hand, they considered that 15 % (8) of the speech acts were neither inappropriate nor appropriate and only (8%) (4 speech acts) were inappropriate or totally inappropriate. Even though some of the sequences may not appear reasonable at first, Coder 1 classified them as appropriate after considering the social variables, specifically, the social power and social distance between the interlocutors. For instance, she expressed that one of the utterances was a "bit of an overshare, but it's dad so appropriate", meaning that the perceived (over) familiarity between the interlocutors was justified. Regarding requests, Coder 2 commented, "for the requests, I can't comment on appropriate or not. It's all authentic native-like language in these situations - therefore, totally appropriate".

**Table 13**

*Appropriateness of refusals in English*

| | English Refusals | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **Totally inappropriate** | 6 | 11 % |
| **2** | | 7 | 13 % |
| **3** | | 9 | 17% |
| **4** | | 6 | 11% |
| **5** | **Totally appropriate** | 26 | 48% |
| | **Total** | 54 | 100 % |

Table 13 displays the ratings of 54 refusals in English. The native speakers assessed 48 % (26) as scale 5 (Totally appropriate) and 11 % (6) as scale 4. The neutral point is represented by 17% (9) of the refusals. The ratings 1 and 2 obtained 13 % (7) and 11 % (6), respectively. One of the native speakers commented that overall the speech acts produced by the participants were appropriate given the modern social conventions used in England.

(1) "This is interesting. I think the only inappropriate responses are the flat 'No'. It's normal for British kids in 2021 to negotiate everything with their parents. Of course, if you think about 1870 or 1920, things would have been very different. I'm not saying kids today should be allowed to do what they like. I'm not saying parents can or should let kids' refusals go. I am saying that these days we can't say that kids challenging parental authority is appropriate or inappropriate. It's just a fact of life, a challenge, that parents know they have to navigate". (Coder 2)

### 4.2.2 Spanish Speech Acts

Refusals are face-threatening acts that fall under the category of Commissives since they force the refuser to (not) do an action (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Refusals are speech acts in which a speaker [fails] to engage in an activity proposed by the interlocutor in response to a starting act (Chen et al., as cited in Félix-Brasdefer, 2006).

**Table 14**

*Appropriateness of requests in Spanish*

| | Spanish requests | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **Totally inappropriate** | 1 | 2% |
| **2** | | 4 | 7% |
| **3** | | 18 | 33% |
| **4** | | 24 | 44% |
| **5** | **Totally appropriate** | 7 | 13% |
| | **Total** | 54 | 100% |

The appropriateness ratings for requests and refusals in Spanish are described in this section. Table 14 (above) shows that from a total of 54 requests in Spanish, 57% (31), the addition of rates 4 and 5 were assessed as ‘appropriate’ and ‘totally appropriate’. In contrast with the requests in English, 33% (18) sequences were considered neutral. Even though the participants used direct requests such as imperatives, they were not regarded as inappropriate because these interactions occurred in asymmetrical power relationships. For instance, one of the participants asked his friend: “Pregúntale a tu mamá a ver cuando puedes (jugar)” [Ask your mum to see when you can (play)]. As Taguchi (2006) claims "when the speech act involves a low degree of imposition and is produced for a person in an equal relationship, the degree of required indirectness is reduced” p. 515”. Regarding rating the requests, the native Spanish speaker expressed the following:

(2) *"considero que algunas peticiones eran un poco hoscas y directas en la relación de madre e hijo, ya que, culturalmente hablando, estoy acostumbrada a que siempre exista un por favor y un gracias en cada una de ellas. Sin embargo, muchas veces no fue así. Sin embargo, si tomaba en cuenta el contexto cultural familiar de los participantes, entraba en disyuntiva con lo anteriormente planteado, ya que muy probablemente todas y cada una de esas respuestas eran completamente aceptadas sin ningún problema y sin ser consideradas como groseras u hoscas…probablemente con los niños, haya un poco más de apertura (también por la situación generacional) a la hora de solicitar o pedir algo". (Coder 3)*

["I consider that some requests were a little sullen and direct in the relationship between mother and child, since culturally I am used to always having a favor and a thank you in each one of them. However, many times this was not the case. However, if he took into account the familiar cultural context of the participants, he was in a dilemma with the above, since it is most likely that each and every one of these answers would be accepted completely without any problem and without being considered rude. or moody ... probably with children there is a little more openness (also due to the generational situation) when asking or asking for something "].

**Table 15**

*Appropriateness of refusals in Spanish*

| | Spanish refusals | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **Totally inappropriate** | 5 | 9% |
| **2** | | 5 | 9% |
| **3** | | 14 | 25% |
| | | 32 | 57% |
| **5** | **Totally appropriate** | 0 | 0% |
| | **Total** | 56 | 100% |

Table 15 shows that 57% (32) of the 56 speech acts were appropriate; however, 25% (14) was neutral and 9% (5) inappropriate or totally inappropriate. The results revealed that in Mexican culture, according to the coder for the Spanish language, direct refusals may be considered as inappropriate, with 9 % (5) awarded for ranks 1 and 2. The native speaker then made reference to the ranking of refusals with the following comment:

*(3) "Considero que como parte de nuestra cultura, se nos hace difícil rechazar algo con lo cual no estamos a gusto o de acuerdo del todo, y cuando alguien es muy directo a la hora de rechazar, puede sentirse como hosco. Pensé que a lo mejor los participantes pudieron haber utilizado otras estrategias "negociación" a la hora de rechazar ciertas situaciones (más por la posición que tienen). Sin embargo, considero que es una perspectiva muy personal de mi parte y que desde otros ojos, dichos rechazos fueron precisos y aceptados. Imagino que es por ello que hay un "empate" entre lo que es neutro y lo que es apropiado, ya que podría decir que las respuestas neutras tienden a ser más hacia lo apropiado que a lo inapropiado. (Coder 3*

*[ "I think that as part of our culture, it is difficult for us to reject something with which we are not happy or agree at all, and when someone is very direct when it comes to rejecting, they can feel surly. I thought that perhaps the participants could have used other "negotiation" strategies when rejecting certain situations (more because of the position they have). However, I consider that it is a very personal perspective on my part and from other eyes, these rejections were accurate and accepted. I imagine that this is why there is a "tie" between what is neutral and what is appropriate, since I could say that neutral responses tend to be more towards appropriate than inappropriate.]*

**4.3 Participants Perception of the Appropriateness of Requests and Refusals**

This study aims to shed light on the speech acts of requests and refusals and language aspects that highlight the importance of politeness in social interactions. Politeness is "a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict

and confrontation inherent in all human interchange" (Lakoff as cited in Mansoor, 2018, p. 21). Being polite "is to speak or behave in such a way as to (appear to) give benefit or value not to yourself but to the other person(s), especially the person(s) you are conversing with" according to Leech (2014, p. 3). In order to analyse the participant's perceptions regarding politeness, appropriateness of their requests and refusals, preference of language, and linguistic resources used to perform the speech acts in this study, a retrospective, unstructured interview was carried out. Regarding language preference, the participants said that they did not prefer one over the other and that being polite is similar in English to Spanish. Consequently, it seemed that the participants are unaware of the difference(s) between the politeness social conventions that exist between English and Spanish. The significance of this gap in their knowledge is something that may affect their pragmatic competence in both languages. Despite this, Ronaldo displays slightly more awareness of the social convention differences, through his comments that he considered himself more polite in English than Spanish. Still, in some way, differences depended on the variables of social power and social distance, which determined the participants' politeness strategies.

*(4) "A ti te pido algo mejor en español porque es tu lengua materna. Porque yo tengo dos y yo no sé cuál aprendí primero. No prefiero ninguno porque en si no se cual palabra aprendí primero. A papá le pregunto diferente. Tal vez porque discuto más contigo y conozco los tricks. Grandpa Dave no me regaña. I'm not gonna argue with him porque apenas si lo veo cada año. Con tía Gigi sería suave. Porque si les digo "No!" o sea no se va a oir bien y van a estar así como ofendidos. Bueno, no ofendidos pero como .. ay! No? O sea inapropriado. Contigo (mamá) es igual. Si te digo no, pues viene de mi corazón. No se la verdad tal vez es un tres, a la mitad bueno, tres and a half. No puedes decir que tu no haces lo mismo, porque o sea tú también me dices 'no' pero no les dices a las otras personas 'NO!' les dices no (más suave). Cuando hablo en inglés es diferente. Well.. it's the same word but it's different. Simmilar but not the same".* (Messi)

*["(When) I ask you for something, it is better in Spanish because it is your mother tongue. Because I have two (languages) and I don't know which one I learned first. I don't prefer any because I don't know which word I learned first. I ask dad differently. Maybe because I argue with you more and I know the tricks. Grandpa Dave doesn't tell me off. I'm not gonna argue with him because I hardly ever see him every year. With Aunt Gigi it would be smooth. Because if I say "No!" In other words, it will not sound well and they will be offended as well. Well, not offended but like .. ow! No? In other words, it is inappropriate. With you (mom) it's the same. If I say no, it comes from my heart. I don't know the truth, maybe it's a three, half good, three and a half. You can't say that you don't do the same, because in other words, you also tell me "no" but you don't tell other people "NO!" You say no (softer). When I speak in English it is different. Well .. it's the same word but it's different. Similar but not the same ". (Messi)]*

*(5) To be polite it is important in English and Spanish porque aquí la verdad no hay tanta cortesía luego nada más la gente dice dame, o ve para allá esto o eso pero aun así es bueno decir por favor, con permiso, etc. Me prestas tu cel vs dame tu cel. English.. la verdad los dos, siento que English es más polite pero aquí en México como ya vivo aquí pues sí sé cómo ser polite en los dos, porque digo gracias, por favor y son las mismas palabras en diferente idioma, pero es el mismo significado. (Ronaldo)*

*[ To be polite it is important in English and Spanish because here the truth is there is not so much courtesy sometimes people say: give me that, or go there this or that but still it is good to say please, excuse me, etc. Can you lend me your cell vs give me your cell phone. The truth is both, I feel that English is more polite but here in Mexico as I already live here, I do know how to be polite in both of us, because I say thank you, please and they are the same words in a different language, but it is the same meaning. (Ronaldo)]*

Regarding the production of the requests and refusals, the participants acknowledged that performing such speech acts is not an easy task. These opinions relate to the fact that both illocutions are face-threatening acts FTA that are cultural and language-dependent. And that the

required strategies for these speech acts vary in indirectness, indirectness, and appropriateness. As Leech (2014) points out, requests need the use of various mitigation or distance strategies to reduce the FTA force and the effective use of politeness devices. On the other hand, according to Beebe et al. (as cited in Aliakbari and Changizi, 2012), refusals often need the employment of indirect strategies in order to lessen the offence to the hearer and a high level of pragmatic competence.

One of the participants also explained the reason for choosing the strategy of 'giving a reason or explanation'.

(6) *"In English is more awkward to say no, por ejemplo, Grandpa Dave, aunty Kate les pregunto si puedo hacer algo por ellos o algo así como con ellos no les hablo tanto, pues me siento obligado. La verdad me cuesta trabajo, pero menos trabajo decirte a ti que no. I can explain something to daddy and say no. I don't know. Le tengo que explicar a papá por qué no quiero hacer algo. Por ejemplo cuando yo te digo: espera y me estás esperando para comer o algo, o sea piensas que nada más estoy viendo la tele pero si no explico qué estoy haciendo tal vez piensas que soy rude. También a ti darte una explicación es más polite. Cuando explicas ya sabe por qué no puedes y no piensas que estás haciéndolo a propósito. Entonces es mejor"*. (Messi)

["In English it is more awkward to say no, for example, Grandpa Dave, Aunty Kate I ask them if I can do something for them or something like that. Because I don't talk to them so often, I feel obliged. It's really hard for me, but less work to tell you no. I can explain something to daddy and say no. I don't know. I have to explain to dad why I don't want to do something. For example when I tell you: wait and you are waiting for me to eat or something, that is, you think that I am just watching TV but if I do not explain what I am doing, you may think I am rude. Also giving you an explanation is more polite. When one explain you already know why you can't and you don't think you're doing it on purpose. Then it is better". (Messi)]

During the retrospective interview, the participants were asked which language they considered to be more polite, and to investigate whether they were aware of the notion of politeness and if they could recognise the possible differences among languages. They responded that in general politeness is necessary in English and Spanish to obtain a positive result regarding requests. However, one of the participants' answers revealed his awareness of politeness but is unconcerned about the variations between the two languages.

*(7) "Yo diría normalmente que los dos pero siento nada más eso. A mi tío Víctor le hubiera pedido diferente. Le hubiera dicho Me prestas dinero por favor? I am confused, en los dos idiomas debo ser cortés. A papá le pregunto más indirectamente y a ti directo. Porque pues .. no se..cuando pido algo debo elegir bien mis palabras porque así tengo más posibilidad de que me digan que sí. Porque preguntando bien, contrario a que no lo hagas pues… Puedo tener un pan de chimichurri: Es correcto porque es cortés. Podría tener es más polite.*

[I would normally say both but I feel nothing more than that. I would have asked my uncle Victor differently. I would have said, can I borrow money please? I am confused, in both languages I must be courteous. I ask Dad more indirectly and you directly. Because well.. I don't know .. when I ask for something I must choose my words well because I have a better chance of being told yes. Because asking well, as opposed to not doing it, well ... I can have a chimichurri bread: It is correct because it is courteous. *Could I have* is more polite] (Ronaldo)

The participants also provided answers regarding their perception of appropriateness. They related their answers to social power, social distance and the cost of the imposition. For example, Messi claimed that to realise a request appropriately in an interaction with his uncle in England, he needed to evaluate the social distance between them. Even though he knows his uncle, he felt nervous and acknowledge that his request was too direct and inappropriate in his view. Furthermore, the use of politeness markers such as 'please' can help a request succeed.

(8) "When I spoke to uncle Matty to ask him some money. I felt stressed, not stressed but I mean It is awkward to ask for something, specially money. Pero o sea tengo una

connection o sea I already know them. Debería ser más fácil, Bueno no.. igual a un extraño es difícil. Por ejemplo cuando alguien pide en la calle dinero para el camión. Pero a ti porque te conozco te puedo preguntar más fácil “oye ma, me puedes dar dinero por favor?” y pido por favor porque es polite. When I request for something it is better than “I want money”. Mi frase ( I need money) no fue muy apropiada pero estaba nervioso. (Messi)

[When I spoke to uncle Matty to ask him some money. I felt stressed, not stressed but I mean It is awkward to ask for something, specially money. But I have a connection I already know them. It should be easier, Well no .. just like a stranger is difficult. For example, when someone asks for money for the truck on the street. But because I know you, I can ask you more easily "hey, can you give me money please?" and I ask please because it is polite. When I request for something it is better so “I want money”. My phrase (I need money) was not very appropriate but I was nervous.] (Messi)

# Chapter V: Conclusions

The purposes of this thesis were to examine the performance of request and refusal strategies employed by two bilingual children of English and Spanish and to analyse whether the request and refusal realisations were appropriate in both languages. In this chapter, the findings and the conclusions are discussed. This chapter also presents the limitations and suggestions for future research, the pedagogical implications, and the contributions to the area of English language teaching.

## 5.1 Conclusions

As mentioned above, this thesis aimed to analyse the request and refusal strategies produced by two bilinguals. Regarding the research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis, the data showed the following:

1. *What are the request and refusal strategies in English and what are the request and refusal strategies in Spanish performed by two bilingual Mexican-British children aged 10 and 12?*

Based on the analysis, the data provided evidence to support that the participants used a variety of strategies when they produced requests and refusals in English and Spanish, even when the same situations were used to trigger the production of requests. Regarding requests, the results revealed that the participants preferred direct strategies over conventionally indirect or non-conventionally indirect strategies in both languages. The findings support Felix-Bradesfer's (2005) conclusion that directness did not imply rude behaviour, but rather that being direct might be interpreted as a manner of demonstrating intimacy or affinity with an interlocutor (Felix-Bradesfer, 2005). The results also showed some differences in the use of sub-strategies in English and Spanish. 'Imperatives' (ya *apágala*) was the most common sub-strategy in Spanish, followed by 'Desires and needs'. These results lend support to Félix-Brasdefer's (2005) observation that Mexican speakers tended to use direct strategies in situations of close distance. Likewise, the highest frequency for request sub-strategies in English was also 'Desires

and needs' (basically *I need money*). It was also found that conventionally indirectness, realized mainly by means of ability in both English and Spanish, was the most common strategy in situations that display more power. Furthermore, these findings support the results of previous studies that have investigated multilingual pragmatic development. Safont-Jordà (2013) found that request strategies produced by one trilingual speaker varied according to their politeness orientation. The pragmalinguistic resources used in her study varied according to the addressee status (social power and social distance); the Spanish and Catalan requests used more direct strategies while English requests employed more conventionally indirect strategies.

Regarding the use of supportive moves, there were no differences between English and Spanish. In both languages, the participants preferred supportive reasons and preparators to mitigate the force of their requests, especially when they used direct strategies. The retrospective interview confirmed that the participants used supportive moves to soften the effect of the FTA on the hearer and accomplish the purpose of their request. Studies on English requests have shown that American English speakers used explanations and justifications most often after the request had been issued (Yu, 1999; Byon, 2004 as cited in Flores-Salgado, 2011). This aspect was evident when supportive moves were used in the two languages under study. It can be observed that the participants used strategies from their two languages when they realized their illocutions.

Expressions of positive politeness in English and Spanish were used by the participants in situations of high degree of imposition and distance. The most common expressions were: *I was wondering if you could*, *could*, *te quería preguntar si*.. 'I would like to ask you if… ', *puedo* 'can', *please, you don't have to say yes, just a bit, poquito,* 'just a bit', *maybe, I know but*…, *mamita linda y preciosa* 'pretty and beautiful mom'. According to Félix-Brasdefer (2005), these expressions downgrade the imposition of the request, give the option to opt out and in some cases, they seek common ground or understanding with the hearer.

Finally, it is important to highlight that in the realization of some requests there was a clear indication of linguistic transfer from English into Spanish. This could be observed especially in the syntactic order of the illocutions (*¿también puedo tener un pan de chimichurri? '*Can I also have a bread of chimichurri?'). This finding lend support to Gutiérrez-Rivas' (as cited in Asención-Delaney & Fernández, 2016) observations that heritage speakers (bilinguals) employed a pragmatic calque process paired with lexical and periphrastic verbal structures to make requests.

Regarding refusals, the participants employed more indirect strategies than direct strategies or adjuncts in English and Spanish. However, in Spanish, participants employed more the 'flat no' sub-strategy than in English. For indirect sub-strategies, the data reports, 'Reason or explanation' (indirect) sub-strategy (*no puedo es que voy a ir a ver a mis ranas)* as the first participant's choice. These results support to Septiany's findings (2013), who observed that both parents and children had a similar tendency to adopt the giving 'Reason and explanation' strategy when refusing the high imposition nature of a request. In addition, she found that power asymmetry in the speaker-hearer relationship between parents and children influenced the choice of refusal methods in a family context. The participants also preferred the 'reason or explanation' sub-strategy over a direct strategy in Spanish. The results also reported that the participants selected the ''Alternative' sub-strategy (*No..... te ayudo con algo más*) (You could ask Ronaldo) in the two languages. These results support Elías' (2015) findings that heritage speakers employed indirect strategies through reasons and explanations to perform refusals in Spanish. Adjuncts were underused in both languages, except for 'Request for clarification' in English.

2. *How sociopragmatically appropriate are the illocutions produced by the children of this study in both languages?*

This question aimed to determine whether the participant's speech acts were appropriate. This research question relates to the notion of pragmatic competence that comprises the knowledge

and the ability to use language appropriately, necessary for effective communication (LoCastro, 2003). In regard to the requests produced in English, the findings showed that just above half of the speech acts were rated as ‘Totally appropriate’. Similarly, most of the refusals in English were rated as ‘Totally appropriate’ by the English coders. In contrast, the Spanish requests and refusals were rated as ‘appropriate’. According to these results, the participants’ requests and refusals may be seen as less appropriate in the Mexican context. The findings and the retrospective interview revealed that the participants may not be fully aware of the pragmatic patterns that were employed in both cultures. Although, they were aware of social variables such as social power and social distance, their sociopragmatic competence was very general and covered characteristics of both languages. Consequently, they were not able to perceive the sociocultural differences of their two linguistic systems.

In addition, the results showed that the participants may have been influenced more by one of their languages and the degree of immersion in English and Spanish. In this case, due to the lockdown, the participants stayed more at home and they were more in contact with the English language. As a consequence, English sociopragmatic norms may have influenced the performance of requests and refusals in Spanish with respect to the degree of directness. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Gutiérrez-Rivas, as cited in Asención-Delaney & Fernández, 2016, Elías 2015). Elias highlighted the importance and the influence of the social context in which the participants are immersed. Thus, the degree of immersion may affect the production of speech acts. Even though the participants lived in Mexico and Spanish may seem to be the dominant language for the participants, they are completely immersed in an English context. Therefore, the results of the present study showed an influence of English on the production of speech acts in Spanish. Similarly, other studies such as Pinto & Raschio’s and Valdés’s, as cited in Félix-Brasdefer, 2019) reported that the influence of the heritage language on English and Spanish bilinguals had reported negative transference from English to Spanish.

### 5.2 Limitations and suggestions for further research

This study has some limitations that need to be addressed. First, the outcomes of this study cannot be generalised due to the unique characteristics of the participants and their context. Two bilingual English-Spanish speakers, ages 10 and 12, who lived in Mexico with a solid English language and cultural influence, participated in the study. As a result, even though this case study was replicated, the results would differ due to the variables' uniqueness. However, this investigation may serve as a guide to study either other bilinguals or monolinguals' speech acts. For instance, the data collection instruments may be used to gather data from children of other languages and ages or be used as a guide to design other instruments more suitable for the characteristics of another case study.

One of the most significant limitations of the present study was that the data was collected during the COVID-19 lockdown, which limited the range of interactions performed by the children. As a result, the interactions analysed happened mainly within the family domain, with little opportunity to interact in other situations and with other people in different degrees of social power and social distance. Despite communicating regularly with their relatives in England, the participants did not have the opportunity to interact with other British children or perform requests when going shopping, travelling, among other situations. Further research that could analyse the performance of such speech acts under conditions in non-COVID times would be valuable.

Another minor limitation for this case study was the time invested in collecting authentic data and its analysis. While there is a significant need for research that includes actual data, it is also true that this can be time demanding. One option for overcoming this obstacle is to focus on only one kind of speech act or just one language; this would be advantageous if time is limited.

The purpose of this study was to identify the most prominent strategies for requests and refusals used by bilingual youngsters and if their illocutions were appropriate for Mexican and

British contexts. Future studies should be conducted on bilingual pragmatic competence and intercultural pragmatics, particularly on children and adolescents whose pragmatic competence is still developing and being refined.

The subject of request and refusal speech acts can be investigated in monolinguals or bilinguals of other languages, for instance, German and Spanish speakers who live in Mexico. Other types of speech acts and their strategies relevant to bilingual children's pragmatic competence development could be the subject of future research.

Aside from the influence of the dominant language in bilinguals, future research might investigate what other factors could affect the choice of politeness strategies and language in bilinguals.

Another suggestion for further research would be to investigate the speech acts of parents and children. This could be extended to examine the degree to which the parents speech acts themselves contribute to the development of pragmatic competence in their children.

To sum up, any research topic involving bilingualism and pragmatics has the potential to be fascinating, with an infinite number of issues to explore, particularly studies that include Mexican participants.

### 5.3 Pedagogical implications

The present case study results confirm that investigating speech acts in bilingual children may benefit parents, researchers, and language teachers. Teachers should encourage the development of bilingual students' pragmatic competence to avoid viewing pragmatics as theoretical without any usefulness. Secondly, teachers could help learners become aware of the production and perception of speech acts and their implications for appropriate and effective communication. They could explicitly teach learners the different speech acts and how to use their language skills appropriately according to context, which would help them avoid misunderstandings in their own and a second language. As Cekaite (2012, p. 1) states, "language is a tool that children and adults use to act in and explore the social world; to create,

develop, and sustain social relationships; and to engage with others in culturally meaningful activities".

The study's findings may be helpful in the development of materials for teaching pragmatics. Educators may be willing to facilitate students in understanding the difference between American and British English to navigate the culture of the variation of English they prefer, understanding that culture also varies from country to country.

**5.4 Study contributions**

The present case study results have confirmed that the development of pragmatic competence is essential for performing appropriate request and refusal speech acts. As Cekaite (2012) states, pragmatic abilities allow children to navigate social and cultural situations better. Preadolescence and adolescence is a stage when children refine and improve their pragmatic skills. As not many studies focus on older children, this study contributes to the area of pragmatics and bilingualism. Especially, this study may help to fill a gap in the existing literature for bilingual children and teenagers and how they acquire their pragmatic competence.

LoCastro (2003, p. 243) states "that every culture has characteristic speech acts that reflect its norms and values". Hence, this research can fill gaps in the field and contribute to cross-cultural pragmatics, addressing the importance of politeness conventions for bilinguals and how this knowledge will allow them to perform speech acts appropriately, more accurately reflecting their specific cultural norms. The results obtained through this investigation could hopefully rise awareness of how important the teaching and modelling of the speech acts of request and refusals are. Also, with children, to highlight to others how important it is to develop and refine their linguistic, communicative and pragmatic competence at a young age if they are to communicate efficiently in bilingual contexts.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Situational instrument for requests

This instrument contains some situations to elicit the realization of requests in English and Spanish.

**Situation 1**

***Cooking***

The participant-observer asks the children to help with cooking pancakes, tostadas, etc., with their mother or father.

**Situation 2**

***Arranging clothes and magazines***

The participants have to reorganise their wardrobes and belongings, and they need to negotiate the best way to reorganise their items with their mother or father.

**Situation 3**

***Shopping***

The participants will go shopping with their parents. Children will request what they need or want to buy.

**Situation 4**

**Building a stadium model**

Children will finally build a stadium model they got for Christmas. They will have to help each other and negotiate the best way to construct the model following the plans included in the box.

**Situation 5**

***Treats***

The children's parents will prepare and eat something tasty, and parents will not offer them any of this food/treat until they make the request.

**Situation 6**

***Playing video games***

Mum and dad will use the computer close to when children are allowed to play with their friends online. Children want to use the computer so they will request it.

**Situation 7**

***A little favour***

Children will be asked to request their uncle Victor (Mexican) to come and install speakers to their video games console.

Children will be asked to request their uncle Matt (British) to interview for their school work.

**Situation 8**

***Pets***

The participants must clean up and feed their pets. Mum or dad will remind them that it is time to do it and that they have to help each other. They will decide who does what (one dog, two turtles, one bird, and one frog).

**Situation 9**

***Making /creating materials***

Mom has to make a puppet or some teaching materials for her class. She will ask the children for help. The children do not have the necessary materials to hand, do have to ask for materials (ribbon, cardboard, glue, etc.) given out; more items will not be enough or handy, so children will need to request for.

**Situation 10**

***Request to their teachers***

Children are in online classes. They need to ask their teachers' permission to miss one day of classes since there will be some home repairs and it will not be possible to attend the class due to the noise and disturbance. They can also ask for the activities covered for that day so they can work on their own.

**Situation 11**

***In the park***

The participant-observer requests children to ask a person on the street that they do not know for some hand sanitiser / a pen /or to borrow a football (depending on the real situation). In this situation, children could agree to perform the request and ask for an object or refuse it. In both cases, the data obtained will be helpful for the study.

**Appendix 2**

*A situational instrument for refusals*

This instrument contains some situations to elicit the realization of refusals in English and Spanish.

**Situation 1** Children will be asked to change the TV channel (when mum or dad notice they are enjoying it)

**Situation 2** Children will be asked to wash the dishes

**Situation 3** Children will be asked to bring some water to mom, dad, or brother while playing their video games

**Situation 4** Children will be asked to bring lunch to aunty (our neighbour) when they break

**Situation 5** Children will be asked to make their beds before having breakfast

**Situation 6** Clean up and feed their pets when they are in classes, watching TV, or playing video games

**Situation 7** Children will be asked to go out with one of their parents to do the shopping straight after school when they probably are tired

**Situation 8** Children will be asked to do extra homework (not mandatory by their teachers) during their holidays. The children will likely protest and refuse this request!

**Situation 9** Children will be asked to stop using the tablet, phone, computer 5-10 minutes after they have started using it

**Situation 10** Children will be asked when they are shopping to pay for their brother's item/product.

Children will be asked to go to bed earlier

## Appendix 3

**Validity instrument**

There are two tasks for these instruments.

**TASK ONE: directness / indirectness; language function**

Please read the English language speech acts (blue text) in the excel database for each set of languages. Then select the type of strategy you think was used by the speakers (options are to the right of the speech acts) and mark your choice with an X in the corresponding box.

Below these instructions are two appendices that give a brief glossary and exemplification of the strategies used. Use these appendices to help you classify the strategies for each type of speech act.

**TASK TWO: judging how appropriate the speech act is to the context it is set in**

Looking at the same speech acts on the excel sheet, select how appropriate/inappropriate you consider the speech acts (rejections and requests) to be, according to the context presented and the social conventions you know to be used in British culture. When deciding, consider aspects of power, the distance between participants, and the cost or degree of enforcement of the request or refusal. Indicate with a number 1 your choice in the same database. The criteria included in the Likert scale are: totally inappropriate = 1, inappropriate = 2, neutral = 3, appropriate = 4 and totally appropriate 5

There are no incorrect answers since this is a qualitative investigation based on opinion.

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Do you consider that each of the speech acts you have classified are appropriate to the context presented and the social conventions used in British culture? When deciding, consider the context and aspects like power, distance, and cost (or the degree) of enforcement of the request or refusal.

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