

**Pragmatic Perception of Politeness in Requests across Academic**

**Cultures of English L1s and Punjabi ESLs**

**M. PHIL THESIS**

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*IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST MERCIFUL, THE MOST*  
*BENEVOLENT*

**Dedicated**  
*To my beloved parents*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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**KHALID AHMED**

## Declaration

*I do hereby declare that this thesis is my own research work and it has not been submitted to any other institution or university for any degree. The sources used for information and the extent to which the work of others has been consulted or utilized have been mentioned in this thesis in the manner conventionally approved for research studies.*

*Signature of the candidate:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Date:* \_\_\_\_\_

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## ***Abstract***

*The present research study is anchored in the fields of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) & cross cultural studies of speech acts to investigate comparatively the pragmatic perception of politeness in 'Request patterns' across cultures of Native English Speakers (ELIs) and Native Punjabi speakers learning English as second language (P-ESLs) in academic settings. The stimulus for this research study is to improve cross cultural communication between English and Punjabi Native speakers by having awareness of differences in the cultural conventions in making requests. To find out the differences and similarities in the request patterns and their respective cultures the researcher has developed Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and Self-Rating Questionnaire (SRQ) as instruments for his work. The data obtained from instruments is analyzed by using the coding scheme of Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) by (Shushana Blum-Kalka, Juliane House & Gabriele Kasper, 1989: 275). It is evident from the results & findings of this study that in spite of the fact that there is great difference in the execution of request statements from the people of both cultural groups (ELIs & P-ESLs) yet they are identical in their pragmatic perception or sensitivity of politeness in the speech act of request. Moreover the stereotypes of less polite or unfriendly attitude of Punjabi ESLs in cross-cultural communication more especially in the speech act of request is originated by the socio-cultural conventions of English society, lack of pragmatic competence of English language of Punjabi ESLs and excellence of Linguistic competence of Native English Language speakers.*

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The present research study is anchored in the fields of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) & cross cultural studies of speech acts to investigate comparatively the pragmatic perception of politeness in ‘Request patterns’ across cultures of Native English Speakers (EL1s) and Native Punjabi speakers learning English as second language (P-ESLs) in academic settings. Every culture displays its own unique politeness patterns in its verbal behavior. During the interaction of people belonging from different cultures, they inclined to have interpretations of the utterances of cultural “others” at the basis of their own native language systems or according to the conventions of their own cultural settings. The non-native speakers may have the appropriate grammatical and lexical knowledge of the targeted language but still they fail to communicate smoothly, in some certain situations due to their lack of pragmatic knowledge of the target language. This tendency leads towards misunderstandings and creates ‘pragmatic failure’ which is the inability to understand what is meant by what is said (Thomas 1983). This pragmatic failure due to the negative transfer of first language (L1) to the second language may also be considered as unfriendly, or even in some cases as racial prejudiced or rude (very impolite). This is the very situation which gives birth to offensive stereotypes. So there is a stereotype that Punjabis (Punjabi speakers) are not much polite.

This Study has explored the similarities and differences at the basis of cultures displayed in the request patterns produced by native speakers of English and native Punjabi Language speakers speaking English as second language in academic settings.

## 1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study is to improve cross cultural communication between English and Punjabi Native speakers by having awareness of differences in the cultural conventions in making requests. This will help to avoid communication breakdowns and to minimize unconscious offensiveness. Making request is the most sensitive act of speech; the requestee expects a considerable degree of politeness from the requester. If both belong to two different cultures then this situation becomes more crucial, as it can be considered as a face threatening Act (FTA) by the addressee because due to lack of politeness from the part of speaker. Politeness belongs to morality, decorum and mannerism. To show politeness makes the interaction of the people more smooth and effective. The act of request, whose illocutionary force is to ask others for some favor or to oblige the speaker in some way, has great application in daily routine life. The request situation requires the highest degree of politeness because it imposes the requester's wish on the requestee and restricts requestee's freedom of action. Therefore, in order to achieve perlocutionary success (Brown and Levinson 1987; for further discussion, see 2.3.2) and to preserve good social relationships, requester need to consider carefully the social variables like social power, social distance between the requester and the requestee and the ranking of request weightage according to the social status of the requestee and the nature of request situation. When the speakers belonging from some other culture need to make request in a second language during cross cultural communication they try to bridge the differences in cultural conventions by the shifting of request patterns from their own native language to the targeted language and result may be in inappropriate requests for the addressee. This is because of language inequivalence due to differences in the cultures, so this study is meant to give a cross sectional layout of English and Punjabi cultures to expose similarities and differences in their conventions.