

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POLITENESS IN ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN REQUEST PATTERNS AMONG STUDENTS AT TRANSILVANIA UNIVERSITY

ANÁLISE COMPARATIVA DA POLIDÊNCIA EM PADRÕES DE PEDIDO EM INGLÊS E ROMENO ENTRE ESTUDANTES DA UNIVERSIDADE DA TRANSILVÂNIA

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Abstract

Politeness, both a linguistic and sociocultural construct, has been extensively examined within Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1979) and Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of face management. However, empirical research on the pragmatic behaviour of Romanian (L1) learners of English (L2) remains limited. This study addresses that gap by analysing how Romanian students formulate requests in both languages and by examining potential transfer from native politeness conventions. A Discourse Completion Task (DCT) with sixteen scenarios varying in power, distance, and imposition was completed by 126 students from Transilvania University of Braşov. Responses were analysed qualitatively using Brown and Levinson's (1987) and Trosborg's (1995) typologies of request strategies. Conventionally indirect forms dominated in both languages but appeared more frequently and elaborately in L1. L2 requests were syntactically polite yet more direct and less contextually mitigated. L1 data showed greater use of external modifiers - apologies, explanations, and greetings - indicating heightened sensitivity to hierarchy. Evidence of pragmatic transfer emerged in the overuse of L2 markers such as please, sorry, and kindly, mirroring L1 deference patterns. Overall, the findings confirm that while learners master the linguistic forms of English politeness, their pragmatic performance remains shaped by Romanian sociocultural norms.

Keywords: Pragmatics. Politeness Strategies. Requests. Speech Acts.

Resumo

A polidez, um conceito tanto linguístico como sociocultural, tem sido amplamente estudada na Teoria dos Atos de Fala (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1979) e no modelo de gestão da face de Brown e Levinson (1987). No entanto, a investigação empírica sobre o comportamento pragmático de alunos romenos (L1) que aprendem inglês (L2) continua limitada. Este estudo aborda essa lacuna, analisando como os estudantes romenos formulam pedidos em ambas as línguas e examinando a potencial transferência das convenções de polidez nativas. Uma tarefa de completamento de discurso (DCT) com dezasseis cenários que variam em poder, distância e imposição foi realizada por 126 estudantes da Universidade Transilvania de Braşov. As respostas foram analisadas qualitativamente utilizando as tipologias de estratégias de pedido de Brown e Levinson (1987) e Trosborg (1995). As formas convencionalmente indiretas dominaram em ambas as línguas, mas apareceram com mais frequência e de forma mais elaborada na L1. Os pedidos em L2 eram sintaticamente polidos, mas mais diretos e menos mitigados contextualmente. Os dados da L1 mostraram um maior uso de modificadores externos — desculpas, explicações e saudações — indicando uma maior sensibilidade à hierarquia. Evidências de transferência pragmática surgiram no uso excessivo de marcadores da L2, como please, sorry e kindly, refletindo os padrões de deferência da L1. No geral, os resultados confirmam que, embora os alunos dominem as formas linguísticas da polidez em inglês, o seu desempenho pragmático continua a ser moldado pelas normas socioculturais romenas.

Palavras-chave: Pragmática. Estratégias de polidez. Pedidos. Atos de fala.



1 INTRODUCTION

Requests occupy a central place in pragmatic research because they combine goal-oriented communication with the management of interpersonal relations. As inherently face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987), requests require speakers to balance efficiency and politeness through context-sensitive mitigation strategies. These strategies vary cross-culturally, reflecting not only linguistic conventions but also broader social norms and expectations of hierarchy, distance, and solidarity. In second language acquisition, the development of pragmatic competence - the ability to use language appropriately in context - often lags behind grammatical and lexical mastery. Learners may thus engage in pragmatic transfer, applying native sociocultural norms to target-language communication, which can result in misaligned formality levels, unintended over-politeness, or perceived rudeness, even when grammatical accuracy is achieved.

The present study investigates how L1 university students formulate requests in both L1 and L2, exploring the extent to which L1 sociopragmatic conventions are maintained, adapted, or restructured in L2. L1, as a Romance language, encodes politeness through elaborate mitigation and deference markers, especially in asymmetrical relationships such as student - professor interactions. L2, by contrast, tends to realize politeness through syntactic mitigation and standardized expressions, favoring brevity and negative politeness over elaboration. Comparing the two thus offers an opportunity to trace how L1 norms of hierarchy and relational warmth influence learners' L2 request strategies.

The study draws on data collected through a DCT administered to 126 undergraduate and postgraduate students of Transilvania University of Braşov. The scenarios varied in power, social distance, and degree of imposition, allowing for a systematic examination of strategy choice. The analysis focuses on how contextual factors interact with linguistic proficiency, revealing patterns such as over-formality, hybrid politeness constructions, and increased mitigation in hierarchical contexts, alongside greater convergence with native norms in peer interactions.

The investigation is guided by four hypotheses:

H1: L1 students will exhibit significant instances of L1 transfer in politeness strategies when formulating requests in L2.

H2: There will be a significant difference in the degree of directness between L1 and L2 requests, with greater indirectness expected in L1, particularly in formal or hierarchical contexts.

H3: The social relationship between interlocutors (e.g., peer-to-peer versus student-to-professor) will significantly influence request strategy selection in both languages.

H4: The perception and realization of politeness in L2 among Romanian learners will diverge from native L2 norms, reflecting the continued influence of L1 cultural and pragmatic frameworks.

By examining how L1 sociopragmatic awareness shapes L2 request formulation, this study contributes to research in interlanguage pragmatics and to the pedagogical design of intercultural communication training in academic settings. Beyond documenting linguistic transfer, it underscores the need for explicit instruction that enables learners to calibrate politeness to the communicative expectations of the target language while retaining intercultural sensitivity.

Although cross-linguistic research on request strategies has been extensive, little empirical work has addressed Romanian learners' pragmatic performance - particularly in comparative analyses of L1 and L2 requests. Most prior studies have focused on English or other major European languages, leaving Romanian politeness conventions largely absent from interlanguage pragmatics research. Addressing this gap, the present study provides novel empirical evidence from an underrepresented linguistic and cultural background, offering a contrastive account of how sociocultural norms shape politeness transfer between Romanian and English. By examining sixteen parallel scenarios in both languages, the research advances understanding of how L1 relational values influence L2 request behavior, thereby extending theoretical models of pragmatic transfer and informing classroom practices that enhance explicit pragmatic awareness in English language learning.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Participants and setting

The study was conducted among 126 undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled at the Faculty of Letters, Transilvania University of Braşov, all of whom were native speakers of L1 and learners of L2 as a foreign language. Participants represented a range of study years and academic programs in philology, applied linguistics, and L2 studies. Given the demographic profile of the faculty, the sample reflected a predominantly female population, consistent with enrollment trends in humanities disciplines.

Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and students were informed that they could withdraw or omit any responses without penalty. The participants' L2 proficiency ranged from upper-intermediate (B2) to advanced (C1-C2), based on self-assessment and university coursework requirements. To capture relevant background factors, the study also collected demographic and linguistic information, including age, gender, year of study (Bachelor's or Master's), level of L2 proficiency, duration of L2 study, and prior experience living or studying in an L2-speaking environment.

This setting was particularly suited to investigating cross-linguistic and cross-cultural pragmatic transfer, as participants shared a common linguistic and educational background while differing in exposure to authentic L2 interaction. The institutional context - an academic environment emphasizing language, communication, and translation - provided an ideal framework for examining how pragmatic competence develops within advanced foreign language education.

2.2 Research instrument

The primary research instrument employed in this study was a DCT, an elicitation tool in interlanguage pragmatics for examining the production of specific speech acts such as requests (Félix-Brasdefer & Shively, 2021). The DCT format allows researchers to control contextual variables while capturing participants' pragmatic intuitions across comparable situations (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981).

The instrument consisted of sixteen written scenarios, each requiring participants to compose an appropriate request in both L1 and L2. Students were instructed to respond as naturally as possible, as they would in a real-life exchange, and to elaborate when necessary to ensure the contextual and pragmatic intent was clear.

The scenarios were designed to systematically vary along the three core sociopragmatic parameters identified by Brown and Levinson (1987): Power (P), Social Distance (D), and Rank of Imposition (R). This allowed for the observation of request behavior across a range of communicative situations, including formal, hierarchical interactions (e.g., student-professor correspondence) and informal, symmetrical interactions (e.g., peer-to-peer exchanges). Such variation enabled the analysis of how contextual power relations and social proximity influenced participants' choice of directness level, mitigation devices, and overall politeness strategy in both languages.

The bilingual design of the DCT further provided a direct comparative basis for identifying L1-to-L2 pragmatic transfer, hybrid politeness forms, and the degree of alignment between sociocultural and linguistic norms in the participants' request formulations.

2.3 Procedure and data analysis

The DCT was administered during scheduled class sessions at the Faculty of Letters, Transilvania University of Braşov, and required approximately 25-30 minutes to complete. Participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous, and students were informed that their involvement would not affect their academic record. To minimize any perception of coercion stemming from the researcher's dual role as a lecturer, instructions emphasized confidentiality and the participants' right to omit questions or withdraw at any stage of the process.

Participants completed a total of sixteen DCT scenarios within a single session - the first eight presented in Romanian and the following eight in English. This order was selected to ensure participants fully understood each scenario in their native language before performing the equivalent task in English, thus maintaining conceptual consistency across versions. While this sequencing facilitated comprehension and

minimized confusion, it may also have introduced potential order effects, as prior engagement with L1 requests could influence subsequent L2 formulations.

Administering both versions in the same session ensured consistency of contextual interpretation, while the separation by language order reduced the likelihood of direct translation or cross-linguistic interference.

The corpus of responses was analysed using qualitative thematic analysis, which allowed for the identification of recurring pragmatic patterns across languages and contexts. The analysis concentrated on three main dimensions: the level of directness employed in request formulation; the use of internal and external mitigation devices, such as apologies, explanations, or expressions of gratitude; and the degree of L1-to-L2 pragmatic transfer evident in the L2 responses. These patterns were then interpreted in relation to contextual factors - particularly social power and distance - to assess how situational variables shaped participants' strategic choices.

The interpretative framework drew primarily on Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of face management and Trosborg's (1995) classification of request strategies. These models provided the conceptual basis for comparing the pragmatic orientation of requests across L1 and L2 and for evaluating how L1 sociocultural norms influenced L2 performance. Each request was categorised according to its level of directness and the presence of modification devices, following operational definitions adapted from these frameworks. The questionnaire was administered through Google Forms, which automatically compiled the responses in spreadsheet format. The data were then exported and organized using Google Forms' built-in analytics and export functions to facilitate comparison of request strategies across languages and contexts. The qualitative interpretation was conducted manually according to the defined qualitative and interpretive analytical framework. Frequency descriptions in the Results section (e.g., 'more frequent,' 'predominant') are used descriptively to indicate relative tendencies rather than statistical measurements.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Theoretical frameworks in pragmatics and politeness

As this study investigates how L1 learners of L2 formulate and interpret requests, situating the analysis within established frameworks of pragmatics, politeness, and interlanguage development, the theoretical framework draws on Speech Act Theory, Politeness Theory, the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), and Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP).

Within the framework of Speech Act Theory, the act of requesting is conceptualized as a directive - an attempt by the speaker to get the hearer to perform a future action (Searle, 1979). Following Austin's (1962) distinction between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, the illocutionary act - the act performed in saying something - constitutes the analytical focus. The head act of a request represents the minimal unit fulfilling the requesting function, which may be modified by peripheral elements that adjust its degree of directness (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Kasper & Rose, 2002, p. 140). Requests may be realized through direct strategies - such as imperatives, performatives, or obligation statements - where the speaker's intent is explicitly expressed (Trosborg, 1995).

From a sociopragmatic perspective, requests are inherently face-threatening acts (FTAs) (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Márquez Reiter, 2000), as they impose on the hearer's negative face - the desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition (Goffman, 1967). To mitigate this threat, speakers select politeness strategies according to the relative power and social distance between interlocutors and the rank of imposition involved (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Márquez Reiter, 2000).

Within the framework of Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory, speakers manage face in performing face-threatening acts (FTAs) such as requests. Drawing on Goffman's (1967) notion of face as an individual's public self-image, the theory distinguishes between negative face - the desire for autonomy - and positive face - the desire for approval and social affiliation. Because requests impose on the hearer's freedom of action, they primarily threaten negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Márquez Reiter, 2000).

To mitigate this threat, speakers employ politeness strategies of varying directness, ranging from bald-on-record realizations to off-record indirectness. Brown and Levinson identify two core redressive orientations: positive politeness, which seeks solidarity and shared identity, and negative politeness, which minimizes imposition through deference and indirectness (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Trosborg, 1995; Geană, 2024). The selection of these strategies depends on the weightiness of the act, expressed as a function of P, D, and R (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

3.2 Cross-cultural and contextual variation in requests

While the theory posits the universality of politeness as a regulative principle of communication, subsequent cross-cultural research (e.g., Trosborg, 1995; Flores Salgado, 2011) has demonstrated that its realization is culturally variable, shaped by community-specific norms of interaction and hierarchies of imposition. In this study, Brown and Levinson's framework provides the analytical basis for examining how learners of L2 negotiate politeness and mitigate face threats in request production.

Cross-cultural investigations of request strategies commonly rely on the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) framework (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Ren, 2022), which categorizes realizations according to their degree of directness. The CCSARP taxonomy distinguishes three principal levels: direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect strategies (Márquez Reiter, 2000). Direct requests are syntactically explicit (e.g., *Give me the remote*) (Daskalovska et al., 2016), conventionally indirect requests employ formulaic reference to contextual preconditions (e.g., *Could you pass the salt?*) (Márquez Reiter, 2000), while non-conventional indirectness involves context-dependent hints whose communicative force must be inferred (e.g., *It's really cold in here*) (Daskalovska et al., 2016).

Across languages, conventional indirectness consistently emerges as the preferred realization strategy (Márquez Reiter, 2000; Trosborg, 1995; Flores Salgado, 2011; DiBartolomeo, 2023), as it balances clarity with mitigation, achieving communicative efficiency without overt coercion. Nonetheless, cross-cultural variation remains substantial. For instance, Spanish and Hebrew speakers tend to favor higher levels of directness than British L2 users, reflecting differing cultural priorities such as sincerity or

efficiency over non-imposition (Márquez Reiter, 2000; Trosborg, 1995). These contrasts highlight that directness preferences are shaped by sociopragmatic norms, which govern what counts as polite or appropriate within specific cultural contexts. Consequently, comparative analyses must account not only for the surface realization of strategies but also for the contextualized norms underlying their use (Trosborg, 1995).

3.3 Interlanguage pragmatics and pragmatic transfer

Within the field of Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) - concerned with how second language (L2) learners perform and interpret communicative actions (Félix-Brasdefer & Shively, 2022; Kasper & Rose, 2002) - this study focuses on the development and transfer of pragmatic competence in request production. Pragmatic competence encompasses both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge (Félix-Brasdefer, 2022): the former refers to learners' command of linguistic resources used to perform speech acts (e.g., modals, levels of directness, conventional formulas), while the latter involves context-specific social norms governing what is considered appropriate in interaction (Ellis & Shintani, 2024).

Even learners with advanced grammatical proficiency may experience pragmatic failure if they apply L1-based norms of appropriateness to L2 contexts (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Flores Salgado, 2011). This phenomenon, known as pragmatic transfer, denotes the influence of previously acquired pragmatic knowledge on L2 use (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Bu, 2012). Transfer can manifest pragmalinguistically, through direct translation of L1 linguistic forms, or sociopragmatically, through the importation of culturally bound social expectations regarding power, distance, or imposition (Flores Salgado, 2011; Ren, 2022).

The extent and direction of transfer remain debated: while some studies link higher proficiency to increased L1 interference due to richer linguistic repertoires (Kasper & Rose, 2002), others suggest that advanced learners exhibit reduced reliance on L1 pragmatic norms as their L2 awareness expands (Bu, 2012; Flores Salgado, 2011). In this study, these perspectives inform the analysis of how L1 learners of L2 negotiate native sociopragmatic conventions and target-language norms in formulating requests.

3.4 Empirical research on L2 request strategies

Among second language speech acts, requests have received the most extensive empirical attention, providing a solid foundation for investigating pragmatic development (Ren, 2022; Kasper & Rose, 2002). Research consistently indicates a developmental trajectory from simple, context-dependent forms toward conventionally indirect (CI) strategies (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

Across European and Romance-language contexts, several recurrent patterns emerge. Studies involving Macedonian, Danish and Saudi EFL learners reveal a predominant reliance on CI strategies, particularly query preparatories, whose frequency tends to increase with proficiency (Trosborg, 1995; Daskalovska et al., 2016; Al-Gahtani & Alkahtani, 2012). However, developmental anomalies have been observed - Danish learners, for instance, exhibit higher rates of directness and less internal modification than native speakers, suggesting incomplete pragmatic adjustment (Trosborg, 1995).

Previous research on request formulation has demonstrated that second language learners tend to transfer L1 politeness conventions into L2 communication, particularly when addressing authority figures or navigating formal contexts (Al-Gahtani & Alkahtani, 2012; Bu, 2012; Daskalovska, et.al., 2016). More recently, Karpava (2025) examined how Cypriot Greek learners of English employ request strategies across contexts varying in power and social distance. Using a combination of DCTs, Multiple-Choice Questionnaires, and Oral Role-Plays, the study found that L2 users consistently preferred conventionally indirect strategies and that their pragmatic behavior was shaped by L1 cultural and linguistic norms. Notably, Karpava reported that learners' degree of indirectness and choice of request perspective were influenced by the perceived hierarchy between interlocutors, confirming the enduring role of sociocultural transfer in interlanguage pragmatics. These studies emphasize that while learners often acquire the grammatical means of expressing politeness, they continue to rely on L1 sociopragmatic norms when assessing power, distance, and imposition.

Beyond levels of directness, Haddad (2017) has drawn attention to the *perspective* from which requests are framed, distinguishing four main orientations: hearer-oriented (e.g., *Could you hand me the remote, please?*), speaker-oriented (*Can I borrow the remote?*), speaker-and-hearer-oriented (*Could we watch something else?*), and

impersonal (*It might be a good idea to see what else is on*). His findings show that learners rarely vary their request perspective intentionally, focusing instead on overt politeness markers rather than on manipulating perspective strategically. These observations resonate with Daskalovska et al. (2016), who found that hearer-oriented requests dominate among EFL learners, while speaker-oriented formulations emerge primarily in hierarchical contexts, where they are perceived as less imposing. This body of research illustrates how pragmatic transfer, structural preference, and perceived power relations interact in shaping learners' L2 request behaviour, providing the theoretical background for the present comparative analysis.

In Romance-language contexts, L1 pragmatic transfer has been repeatedly documented. Mexican Spanish learners of L2 display a strong and persistent preference for CI strategies across proficiency levels, reflecting continuity with L1 pragmatic norms (Flores Salgado, 2011). While higher-proficiency learners adopt more mitigated and conventionalized forms, they may still fall short of native-like complexity, particularly in the use of biclausal mitigators (e.g., *I was wondering if you could...*) (Flores Salgado, 2011).

These cross-linguistic findings highlight that even when languages share similar structural resources for requesting - such as modals of ability or willingness - the pragmatic deployment, frequency, and contextual appropriateness of these forms are profoundly shaped by L1 norms. Consequently, the development of L2 request competence cannot be fully explained by linguistic proficiency alone but must be understood in light of sociopragmatic transfer. For learners in the Romanian context, prior work suggests that explicit instruction and culturally grounded communicative practice significantly enhance pragmatic awareness and appropriateness in L2 use (Bărbuleț, 2024).

In summary, the reviewed literature converges on several key premises: requests function as face-threatening acts governed by universal communicative principles but realized through culture-specific politeness conventions; conventional indirectness represents a pragmatically optimal balance between clarity and mitigation; and L2 learners' pragmatic development is heavily mediated by L1 transfer and contextual sociopragmatic knowledge. These theoretical insights form the interpretative foundation for the present study, which explores how Romanian learners of English employ

politeness, directness, and display cultural expectations when performing the speech act of requesting.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Overview of the dataset

The study was based on 126 valid responses collected from students enrolled in the Faculty of Letters at Transilvania University of Braşov. The participants represented both undergraduate and graduate programmes, though the sample was strongly dominated by first-year Bachelor students, who accounted for 79.4 percent of all respondents. The remaining participants were distributed across the second and third years of the Bachelor programme, each representing 7.9 percent, while only a small proportion - 2.4 percent each - were enrolled in the first and second years of the Master's programme.

In terms of age, most respondents were young adults between twenty and twenty-nine years old, who constituted 54 percent of the sample. Teenagers aged eighteen to nineteen represented 44.4 percent, while only two participants (1.6 percent) were middle-aged adults between thirty and fifty-nine. No respondents were over sixty years old.

The gender distribution mirrored the general demographic pattern of the Faculty of Letters. Female participants formed a clear majority, representing 79.4 percent of the total sample. Male students accounted for 18.3 percent, while 3.2 percent identified as non-binary and 1.6 percent preferred not to disclose their gender.

L1 was the dominant mother tongue, spoken by 93.7 percent of respondents, while Hungarian was reported by 7.1 percent. One participant described a bilingual background involving Italian and L2, and one response did not specify a language.

With regard to L2 proficiency, participants demonstrated a predominantly high level of competence. Over half (53.2 percent) self-assessed as advanced users at the C1-C2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, and a further 46 percent placed themselves at the B1-B2 level. Only three respondents (2.4 percent) reported a beginner level of A1-A2.

The majority of students had an extensive history of exposure to L2. Approximately 43.7 percent had been using or studying L2 for more than ten years, 37.3

percent for seven to nine years, 15.1 percent for four to six years, and 4 percent for one to three years. Only 10.3 percent of the participants indicated that they had lived or studied in an L2-speaking country, most commonly in the United Kingdom, Canada, or the United States, while 89.7 percent had no immersive experience abroad.

Overall, the dataset is characterized by homogeneity in educational background and linguistic profile. The typical respondent was a L1 female student in the first year of undergraduate study, aged between eighteen and twenty-four, possessing advanced but classroom-based L2 proficiency and limited direct exposure to Anglophone environments. This profile provides a coherent foundation for examining L1-L2 pragmatic transfer in request formulation.

4.2 Influence of social context and illustrative request formulations

The findings confirm that social context strongly shaped learners' request strategies in both languages. In hierarchical situations - particularly student - professor interactions - participants in both L1 and L2 employed extensive mitigation, apologies, and formulaic deference. Typical L1 openings such as „*Bună ziua, domnule profesor, îmi cer scuze că vă deranjez...*” (‘Good afternoon, professor, I’m sorry to bother you...’) combine greeting, apology, and justification before the actual request. Their L2 counterparts, while grammatically correct, display a cautious tone through modals and apologies: “*I’m sorry to bother you, could you possibly...*” or “*I would like to ask if you could write me a recommendation letter.*”

The contrast between L1 and L2 realizations is evident in the structure and tone of formal correspondence. A Romanian example such as „*Bună ziua! Aș avea nevoie de o scrisoare de recomandare, vă rog frumos, dacă se poate.*” (‘Good afternoon! I would need a recommendation letter, please, if possible.’) mirrors its English equivalent “*I was wondering if it is possible for me to receive a recommendation letter written by you for a scholarship I am applying for.*” Both are polite, but the L1 version contains more emotional warmth and ritual politeness markers (*vă rog frumos; dacă se poate*), while the L2 version relies on syntactic softeners (*would; if it is possible*).

Another frequent L1 pattern includes cumulative politeness layering, typical of Romanian deferential style: „*Îndrăznesc să vă rog să îmi scrieți o recomandare pentru*

bursă.” (‘I dare to ask you to write me a recommendation letter.’). In L2, literal translations such as “*Good day, professor, I dare request a recommendation letter from you.*” sound archaic or overly ceremonious, revealing pragmatic transfer from L1 ritual forms into English. Similar transfer is visible in “*Dear sir, I would appreciate if you would have the amability [sic] to support me with a recommendation letter.*” - a direct calque of *amabilitate* that demonstrates lexical and cultural carryover.

Another telling case of L1 influence appears in “*Good morning Mr. X, I wanted to kindly ask you to write a recommendation letter for a scholarship, if you could.*” The phrasing combines multiple mitigation devices (“wanted to kindly ask... if you could”), paralleling the L1 formula „*Aș dori să vă rog frumos dacă se poate.*” While natural in Romanian, this redundancy sounds overly formal in L2 academic discourse. Likewise, “*I am writing to ask for your help, if that is not bothering you.*” echoes the deferential „*Vă scriu pentru a vă ruga, dacă nu vă deranjez.*”, maintaining L1 emotional tone and avoidance of imposition.

Some students justified their requests explicitly, a strategy reflecting L1 transparency and self-presentation norms. For example: “*Dear Professor, I am writing this to request a recommendation letter, for it is needed for my scholarship.*” reproduces the L1 style „*Vă scriu pentru a vă cere o recomandare, fiind necesară pentru bursa mea.*” In English, this type of justification is unnecessary, since the request itself implies the need. Similarly, “*Good evening! I wish to request a recommendation letter so that I can achieve a scholarship. I consider myself worthy of it, since I reached the necessary achievements during your courses.*” transfers the deferential closing „*cu tot respectul, domnule profesor*” (‘with all due respect, professor’) into English, where it sounds overly self-conscious.

The same L1 ceremonial tone appears in “*Dear Mrs...! I am writing to you in connection with a student event that I am organising. It will take place at the university’s library on 23 January 2024 at 6 o’clock. I would really appreciate if you could attend because I have worked hard to bring it to life and I can ensure you that it will be an evening full of joy and distraction. I wish you a wonderful day! Yours faithfully, ...*” - a long, affectively charged message corresponding to the Romanian „*Ne-ar face o mare plăcere dacă ați putea participa... prezența dumneavoastră ar fi o onoare.*” In English,

the tone becomes too emotional for formal correspondence, illustrating how L1 relational warmth can lead to stylistic hybridization.

Another striking example reads: *“With all due respect, Professor X, would you be kind enough to thoroughly [sic] rip some of your time to evaluate all the years of study we have worked through together, and therefore compose a recommendation letter for scholarship?”* The metaphorical phrasing derives directly from *„a-mi acorda din timpul dumneavoastră prețios”* (‘to grant me some of your precious time’), demonstrating literal translation of Romanian honorific expressions.

Despite these tendencies, many students produced L2 requests that align closely with native-like norms. Examples such as *“Hey Professor! I’m applying for the Erasmus scholarship and would be grateful if you could write a recommendation letter for me. Thank you!”* or *“Hello! Could you please sign my mobility document today?”* are concise, friendly, and pragmatically balanced. Intermediate forms combine both influences, as in *“Hello teacher! I would like to ask you if you can help me with a recommendation letter for a scholarship. I would be grateful. Thank you!”* - polite and accurate, yet still cautious in tone.

Peer-to-peer interactions displayed the strongest pragmatic convergence between L1 and L2. Informal L1 formulations such as *“Salut! Poți, te rog, să mă ajuți la formularea unei cereri de bursă?”* (‘Hi! Could you please help me write a scholarship application?’) and *“Hei, scuză-mă pentru deranj, dar mă întrebam dacă m-ai putea ajuta cu un sfat.”* (‘Hey, sorry to bother you, but I was wondering if you could help me with some advice.’) correspond closely to L2 equivalents: *“Hey, can you please review my paper?”* or *“Hi! Could you take a look at my scholarship essay?”* Both languages show similar pragmatic patterns: brief greetings, softeners (“sorry,” “te rog”), and gratitude markers.

Such examples confirm that hierarchical asymmetry prompts higher politeness and mitigation in both languages, whereas peer contexts favor solidarity and pragmatic efficiency. Learners’ L2 requests mirror their L1 orientation toward respect and non-imposition in vertical interactions but adopt near-native directness in horizontal ones. This variation demonstrates how power distance and context shape pragmatic choices more decisively than linguistic proficiency.

The dataset shows that students' English requests occupy a continuum from deferential and verbose to concise and natural. The elaborated, emotionally expressive L1 style often carries into L2, producing polite but overly formal English. As interactional distance decreases, these L1-driven features diminish, giving way to pragmatically efficient and native-like formulations.

4.3 Cross-linguistic transfer patterns

The comparative analysis reveals consistent evidence of cross-linguistic transfer from L1 to L2 in both the linguistic form and the sociopragmatic orientation of requests. Learners tend to map familiar politeness routines from their native language onto English structures, resulting in messages that are grammatically accurate but pragmatically marked by over-formality or emotional intensity. This transfer occurs on three interrelated levels: lexical, structural, and sociopragmatic.

At the lexical level, direct translations of Romanian politeness markers frequently appear in English, such as *amability* for *amabilitate*, *solicit* for *a solicita*, or *I dare to ask* for *îndrăznesc să vă rog*. These lexical calques, while semantically comprehensible, convey exaggerated politeness and create a ceremonial tone uncommon in native English academic discourse.

At the structural level, learners often transfer the multi-move pattern typical of L1 requests - greeting, apology, justification, request, and gratitude - into English, producing long, layered constructions such as: "*Dear Professor, I am writing to you to ask, if it is not too much trouble, for a recommendation letter that I need for my scholarship. Thank you very much for your understanding.*" This reflects the Romanian preference for explicit mitigation and relational elaboration („*Îmi cer scuze că vă deranjez... aş avea nevoie de o recomandare, vă rog frumos, dacă se poate.*”).

At the sociopragmatic level, transfer manifests through learners' perception of what constitutes appropriate politeness. English requests that are syntactically polite but socially excessive - such as "*Would you be so kind as to write me a letter of recommendation, dear professor?*" - demonstrate how Romanian deference conventions are reinterpreted in L2 contexts. These patterns show that while learners possess advanced

linguistic competence, their pragmatic performance continues to be shaped by the interpersonal norms of their native culture.

4.4 Perception of politeness in L2 and L1

The qualitative data indicated that students conceptualize politeness differently in the two languages. L2 politeness was perceived as primarily linguistic and form-based, dependent on the presence of explicit markers such as modal verbs, conditional phrasing, or lexical items like “please.” L1 politeness, by contrast, was regarded as socially motivated and contextually anchored, relying on the relative age, status, and familiarity between interlocutors.

This discrepancy in perception explains occasional pragmatic mismatches. For example, several students addressing professors in L2 employed the structure “Can you...” instead of “Could you possibly...,” assuming the former to be sufficiently polite because of its functional equivalence to „Poți, te rog...” in L1 (“Professor, can you write me a letter of recommendation regarding a scholarship, if possible”, “Good evening ... can you please offer me a recommendation letter for a scholarship?”, “Good morning teacher! Sorry for disturbing you. In order to get the scholarship for China I need a recommendation letter from you. Can you help me please?”, “Hello! I’m sorry for disturbing you, but I need your help with a recommendation letter for a scholarship. Can you help me please?”). Such examples illustrate a subtle misalignment between linguistic and sociocultural notions of appropriateness.

4.5 Summary of qualitative insights

Across the dataset, five major tendencies emerged. First, L1 politeness norms strongly influenced L2 request construction, particularly in hierarchical interactions. Second, L1 requests exhibited more complex structural layering through greetings, apologies, and gratitude, whereas L2 requests relied on more formulaic and concise expressions. Third, peer interactions demonstrated the closest alignment between L1 and L2 strategies. Fourth, several L2 responses displayed over-politeness or hybridization, confirming that students were still negotiating appropriate degrees of formality. Finally,

strategy choice was consistently shaped by the perceived power distance and the formality of the communicative context.

These results demonstrate that L1 students possess a well-developed awareness of politeness as a communicative principle but have not yet fully internalized the sociocultural pragmatics of L2. Their L2 performance remains influenced by the relational values of their native culture, resulting in an intermediate politeness style that blends linguistic accuracy with culturally transferred deference.

5 DISCUSSION

This section interprets the findings in relation to the four hypotheses and to the theoretical frameworks outlined earlier. The analysis reveals that Romanian learners' English requests display systematic patterns of L1 pragmatic transfer, contextual sensitivity to social hierarchy, and partial convergence with L2 norms in peer interactions. Each hypothesis is discussed with reference to prior research in interlanguage pragmatics, followed by implications for teaching and further research. The results contribute to understanding how sociocultural values shape L2 politeness and highlight the need for explicit pragmatic instruction in English language education.

H1. Transfer of Politeness Strategies from L1 to L2

Results clearly support Hypothesis 1: Romanian students transferred L1 politeness conventions into their L2 performance. L2 requests frequently replicated Romanian formulas of deference through cumulative politeness markers such as *please*, *sorry*, and *kindly*, mirroring their L1 equivalents *vă rog* and *îmi cer scuze*. Similar transfer effects were reported by Bu (2012) and Al-Gahtani & Alkahtani (2012), who observed that learners often rely on L1-based mitigation when navigating hierarchically sensitive interactions. The persistence of such structures indicates that sociopragmatic norms are more resistant to change than grammatical or lexical competence, aligning with the developmental claims advanced by Kasper & Rose (2002) and Flores Salgado (2011).

H2. Differences in Directness and Mitigation across L1 and L2

Findings also confirm Hypothesis 2, which predicted significant variation in the degree of directness between Romanian and English requests. The data show that while indirect strategies dominated in both languages, Romanian requests were generally

longer, more deferential, and structurally layered through greetings, apologies, and gratitude. In contrast, English versions were shorter and more formulaic, relying on modal constructions such as *could you* or *would you*. This pattern aligns with Trosborg's (1995) typology and supports Brown and Levinson's (1987) claim that indirectness serves as a face-preserving device in cultures valuing hierarchy and respect. The Romanian learners' tendency toward cumulative mitigation echoes observations by Daskalovska et al. (2016) and Haddad (2017), who found that learners often prioritize politeness markers over contextual adaptation. These findings reinforce that the degree of directness reflects not only linguistic proficiency but also the pragmatic weight of social relations encoded in L1.

H3. Influence of Social Context on Strategy Selection

The results strongly support Hypothesis 3, confirming that social context - particularly power distance and formality - directly shaped request strategy choice in both languages. In student-to-professor interactions, participants systematically employed negative politeness strategies such as conditional phrasing (*I'm sorry to bother you, could you possibly...*) and deferential openings (*Bună ziua, domnule profesor, îmi cer scuze că vă deranjez...!* "Good afternoon, Professor, I'm sorry to bother you."). These forms mirror Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of deference and align with findings by Márquez Reiter (2000) and Bărbuleț (2024), which show that hierarchical settings elicit elaborate mitigation in formal European discourse traditions. Peer-to-peer contexts encouraged positive politeness, with direct, cooperative, and friendly formulations in both L1 and L2 (e.g., *Hey, could you send me your notes?* / "*Poți, te rog, să-mi trimiți notițele?*"). This convergence suggests that Romanian learners pragmatically adjust to relational symmetry, supporting Brown and Levinson's (1987) view that solidarity reduces the need for linguistic deference.

H4. Perception and Realization of Politeness in English

The findings also confirm Hypothesis 4, demonstrating that Romanian learners' perception of politeness in English diverges from native norms because it is filtered through their L1 sociocultural framework. Participants consistently viewed politeness as a linguistic feature - something achieved through visible markers such as *please*, *sorry*, or conditional verbs - rather than as a context-dependent social negotiation. This reflects what Ren (2022) describes as a reliance on form-based rather than interaction-based

pragmatics in foreign language use. The over-politeness and hybridization visible in L2 responses (e.g., *I would like to kindly request a few moments of your time...*) further indicate that learners equate elaborate phrasing with respect, echoing the Romanian communicative norm of affective deference. Such patterns align with Ellis et al. (2024), who argue that pragmatic competence does not automatically accompany grammatical proficiency, and with Flores Salgado (2011), who emphasizes the need for explicit instruction to bridge this pragmatic gap. Ultimately, while learners command the linguistic tools of English politeness, their pragmatic realizations still carry the relational ethos of Romanian courtesy.

These findings validate all four hypotheses and confirm that pragmatic transfer, contextual sensitivity, and culturally mediated politeness remain defining features of Romanian learners' L2 request behavior. The data reveal that while learners have acquired the grammatical and lexical resources of English politeness, their pragmatic production continues to reflect the relational norms of their native culture. This hybrid discourse style - simultaneously accurate and affectively deferential - illustrates an intermediate stage of pragmatic development shaped by sociocultural expectations rather than linguistic limitation. The study thus extends prior work in interlanguage pragmatics by showing how politeness in L2 emerges as a dynamic negotiation between form, function, and cultural identity, offering direct pedagogical implications for awareness-based pragmatics instruction.

The findings of this study provide empirical confirmation of the theoretical premises outlined in Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1979) and in politeness models developed by Brown and Levinson (1987), Trosborg (1995), and Márquez Reiter (2000). The comparative analysis of L1 and L2 request realizations demonstrates that L1 students' L2 performance displays a clear interlanguage transfer of L1 sociopragmatic norms. This transfer is most evident in the preference for indirect strategies, elaborate mitigation, and the use of external modifiers such as greetings, apologies, explanations, and expressions of gratitude or respect.

Consistent with Searle's (1979) categorization of directives, requests in both L1 and L2 were designed to elicit an action from the hearer, yet the degree of directness and complexity of structure varied systematically with social configuration. In hierarchical interactions, particularly student - professor scenarios, participants demonstrated

heightened sensitivity to face threat (Brown & Levinson, 1987), opting for extensive redressive action. L1 responses, however, went beyond mere protection of the hearer's negative face, reinforcing positive face through warmth, gratitude, and deference - strategies deeply rooted in L1 communicative culture (Geană, 2024).

The dataset revealed that L1 requests exhibited far greater structural layering than their L2 counterparts, frequently combining greeting–apology–request–gratitude sequences. Such cumulative politeness routines highlight the relational nature of L1 politeness, where multiple moves collectively construct respect and affiliation. L2 responses, by contrast, relied on formulaic and condensed structures (*“Could you please...”, “I was wondering if...”*), emphasizing efficiency over elaboration. These cross-linguistic differences support Brown and Levinson's (1987) claim that the variables of P, D and R condition strategy selection: when P and D were high, L1 speakers engaged in multi-layered politeness work, while L2 realizations favored pragmatic economy.

Further, the L2 data contained numerous instances of hybridization and over-politeness, confirming that learners are still negotiating appropriate degrees of formality. Phrases such as “I would like to solicit a recommendation letter” or “May I receive it for using it later in my curriculum vitae” exemplify lexical calquing and excessive formality traceable to L1 norms of hierarchical address. Even grammatically accurate L2 utterances, like “I won't take up too much of your time” or “Your presence would be very inspiring for everyone,” convey a level of emotional deference unusual in native L2 communication. These hybrid patterns indicate sociopragmatic transfer, not linguistic deficiency, as learners map L1 values of respect and hierarchy onto L2 forms.

A clear continuum of pragmatic adaptation also emerged across contexts. In hierarchical situations characterized by higher power distance, learners produced verbose, deferential, and heavily mitigated requests, reflecting strong sensitivity to status and formality. In more balanced interactions, participants employed hybrid formulations that combined respect with emerging informality, indicating a shift toward pragmatically economical choices. Peer-to-peer exchanges - where power distance was minimal - showed the closest alignment between Romanian and English strategies, with requests in both languages marked by solidarity, informality, and positive politeness. This pattern suggests that while hierarchical contexts reinforce L1-driven deference and elaborate politeness, egalitarian relationships foster more natural and near-native pragmatic

convergence. The findings therefore corroborate all four hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 is confirmed through the consistent transfer of L1 politeness strategies into L2; Hypothesis 2 through the significantly greater indirectness and mitigation observed in L1, especially in formal contexts; Hypothesis 3 through the clear contextual influence of social hierarchy on strategy choice; and Hypothesis 4 through the divergence between students' conceptualization of politeness and native L2 pragmatic norms.

These results extend existing interlanguage pragmatics research (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Flores Salgado, 2011) by illustrating how grammatical proficiency does not guarantee pragmatic equivalence. Despite their high linguistic competence (C1 - C2 levels), L1 learners' L2 requests remain culturally inflected, often perceived by native interlocutors as over-formal or affectively marked. This supports Thomas's (1983) distinction between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence: learners master the linguistic means for politeness but not always the culturally appropriate degree or form of its realization.

Pedagogically, these findings highlight the importance of explicit pragmatic instruction. As Flores Salgado (2011) notes, communicative competence extends beyond syntactic accuracy to situational appropriateness. Integrating awareness-raising tasks around power, distance, and imposition in L2 request formulation could help learners recalibrate formality levels and distinguish linguistic politeness from culturally embedded relational norms.

From a broader theoretical standpoint, the results affirm the universality of Brown and Levinson's dual concept of face while emphasizing that the weighting of negative and positive face is culture-specific. L1 politeness privileges positive face - respect, warmth, and acknowledgment of hierarchy - whereas L2 pragmatics prioritizes negative face and conversational efficiency. The L1 learners' L2 requests thus occupy an intermediate pragmatic space, reflecting linguistic advancement and cultural continuity.

This study demonstrates that pragmatic transfer remains a defining feature of L2 request behavior. L1 learners' negotiation of formality and face in L2 highlights that developing pragmatic competence involves internalizing culturally grounded interactional values besides mastering forms.

6 CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The present comparative investigation of L1 and L2 request strategies among students at Transilvania University of Braşov confirms and extends the core principles of Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1979) and Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Trosborg, 1995; Márquez Reiter, 2000). Requests, as contextually bound illocutionary acts, revealed themselves to be particularly sensitive to the variables of power, social distance, and imposition—confirming their suitability as diagnostic tools for tracing pragmatic transfer. The findings demonstrate that L1 learners' L2 requests are shaped by a sociopragmatic orientation inherited from their L1, where politeness is conceptualized less as a linguistic convention and more as a relational responsibility grounded in deference, gratitude, and interpersonal warmth.

Across the dataset, students exhibited elaborate, multi-layered politeness structures in L1 - greeting, apology, justification, and thanks - whereas their L2 equivalents were more formulaic, relying on standardized expressions. This contrast highlights a deep-rooted difference in cultural expectations: L1 requests aim to construct social harmony through cumulative politeness, whereas L2 communication tends to favor efficiency and syntactic mitigation. When transposed into L2, L1 students often produced hybrid or over-polite formulations, which, while linguistically accurate, carried an exaggerated degree of formality by native L2 standards. These outcomes confirm that pragmatic transfer operates through culturally embedded perceptions of hierarchy and appropriateness, more than through language forms.

The results also highlight a continuum of pragmatic adaptation shaped primarily by power relations and interactional context. Participants operating in hierarchical settings with high perceived power distance produced verbose, deferential, and heavily mitigated requests, reflecting the influence of Romanian norms of respect and formality. In more balanced situations, students adopted hybrid strategies that combined deference with greater directness, signaling an emerging sensitivity to English norms of pragmatic efficiency. Peer-to-peer interactions revealed the strongest alignment between L1 and L2 realizations, as both sets of requests were characterized by informality, collaboration, and positive politeness. Collectively, these findings validate the study's hypotheses: pragmatic transfer remains robust across proficiency levels; directness and mitigation

vary according to social context; and students' perception of politeness in English continues to be mediated by Romanian sociocultural frameworks. From a pedagogical standpoint, these findings highlight the importance of explicit pragmatic instruction within L2 language teaching. As Kasper and Rose (2002) and Flores Salgado (2011) emphasize, pragmatic competence does not develop automatically with grammatical proficiency; it requires targeted awareness-building and guided practice. Instructors should therefore integrate contrastive pragmatic activities - for example, rewriting L1-style requests in culturally appropriate L2, analyzing authentic interactions, or discussing shifts in tone according to power and distance. Brown and Levinson's (1987) variables of P, D, and R provide a practical analytic lens for helping learners discern when indirectness, mitigation, or directness are contextually appropriate.

Building on these perspectives, Ellis et al. (2024) argue that pragmatic competence involves both explicit and implicit dimensions of knowledge, with the distinction best understood in terms of processing rather than awareness. Their psycholinguistic approach highlights that pragmatic behavior depends not only on linguistic proficiency but also on the learner's ability to process contextual information automatically. This distinction is relevant for the present study, where learners' written responses in the DCT reveal explicit politeness awareness rather than spontaneous, implicit pragmatic control.

Equally essential is enhancing metapragmatic reflection - encouraging learners to articulate their own assumptions about politeness and to recognize that markers such as "please," modal verbs, or apologies may function differently across cultural settings. Such reflection can reduce instances of over-politeness or emotional excess that stem from direct transfer of L1 norms. Beyond the classroom, these findings support integrating pragmatic awareness into ESP curricula and teacher education programmes, where interlanguage data can be used to model how social and cultural values manifest in linguistic choice.

In conclusion, this study reaffirms that linguistic mastery alone does not guarantee intercultural communicative competence. L1 students' L2 requests reveal both high linguistic accuracy and enduring cultural imprint, demonstrating that politeness is not universal but socially constructed and contextually negotiated. Developing effective communicators therefore requires corroborating linguistic and cultural knowledge -

helping learners move from grammatical correctness toward pragmatic appropriateness and intercultural sensitivity.

7 LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This study needs to be read in light of several methodological and contextual constraints arising from the dataset. First, the data were elicited through a DCT, which, although highly suitable for comparing large numbers of responses across identical scenarios (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989), inevitably produces idealized, “over-tidy” politeness. Because the data were collected through a DCT, they represent participants’ intended language use rather than naturally occurring interaction. Consequently, the results should be interpreted as indicative of perceived politeness norms rather than definitive evidence of real-time communicative behavior. In the present case, this is visible in the frequent stacking of greetings, apologies, and thanks, and in the unusually elaborate L2 formulations that students would not necessarily use in real email exchanges. To capture how L1 learners actually negotiate requests - how they downgrade or upgrade after a recipient’s response - future work should triangulate DCT data with naturally occurring emails to instructors, role-plays simulating power-asymmetrical encounters, and, ideally, conversation-analytic examinations of live student - teacher interaction.

Second, the participant group was relatively homogeneous: all were students from the Faculty of Letters at Transilvania University, with high exposure to L2 and good metalinguistic awareness. This produced very interesting cases of high grammar / lower pragmatics, but it also limits generalizability. Learners from technical faculties, from non-urban areas, or from programmes with less contact with L2 may display different thresholds for formality and different tolerance for directness. Comparative samples from other L1 universities - or from L1 students studying abroad - would help determine whether the strong L1-driven deference observed here is local, institutional, or more widely L1.

Third, the design was cross-sectional. While the dataset reveals a continuum of pragmatic adaptation - ranging from highly deferential to near-native realizations - it cannot determine whether learners move along this continuum as a result of increased

exposure to authentic L2 interaction or targeted pragmatic instruction. A longitudinal design - for example, examining students before and after participation in international mobility programs, explicit pragmatics training, or sustained communication with English-speaking staff - would allow researchers to trace whether over-politeness and hybridization gradually decrease over time.

Fourth, the present analysis draws only on production data. To understand the impact of these over-polite or hybrid L2 requests, future research should include native-speaker or near-native ratings of appropriateness, naturalness, and perceived formality. This would bridge the gap between what L1 learners intend (respect, warmth, deference) and what an L2-speaking academic might hear (stiffness, emotional excess, or unnecessary distance).

Finally, the study focused on requests only, a speech act with high face-threat and therefore high vulnerability to transfer. To determine whether the same L1 sociopragmatic imprint appears across the board, further research should extend the analysis to refusals, follow-up emails (reminders), apologies to teachers, and even peer conflict management, where L1 positive-politeness routines may surface differently.

Despite these limitations, the present study offers a solid empirical base showing that even advanced L1 learners operate in a hybrid pragmatic space, and it points toward a productive research agenda: combine elicited and naturalistic data, diversify learner profiles, add perception studies, and test the effects of explicit pragmatics instruction on mitigating L1 transfer in academic L2

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD STATEMENT

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki (2013 revision) and local regulations governing research ethics. The protocol was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of Transilvania University of Braşov (Approval No. 41, 30 January 2024).

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study. Participation was voluntary, and all respondents were informed about the study's purpose, the approximate duration (25 - 30 minutes), and their right to withdraw at any point without penalty. Given the minimal-risk, fully anonymous nature of the research, consent was obtained implicitly through questionnaire completion. No personal identifiers (e.g., names or email addresses) were collected, and responses were recorded under numerical codes only to ensure complete confidentiality.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Data are not publicly available due to privacy and ethical restrictions involving human participants.

THE DATA

A Comparative Analysis of Politeness in English and Romanian Request Patterns among Students at Transilvania University.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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