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ABSTRACT

A study investigated politeness indicators in the speech of three groups of university students: 37 native Spanish speakers, in Spain; 34 American students; and 33 native Spanish-speakers learning English as a Second Language (ESL) in Spain. Subjects responded to a questionnaire that outlined 24 situations combining 2 contextual variables: 2 degrees of social distance or familiarity, and 3 degrees of social dominance of interlocutors; each of the 6 variable combinations was represented in 4 situations. Subjects were asked what they would say in each situation. The first subject group was given the questionnaire in Spanish; the others were given an English version. Responses were analyzed for lexical forms that served as mitigators in direct requests, including frequency, type of strategy used, and inclusion of the hearer in the request statement. Results do not support the traditional assumption that directness and politeness are incompatible. In particular, the data on Spanish-speakers were characterized by patterns including the hearer in the interaction and considering his needs. Native English-speakers were, in general, more impersonal. The type of politeness encountered in the Spanish sample exemplified "positive politeness." A brief bibliography is included. (MSE)

Direct Requests Can Also Be Polite[1]

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1. Introduction

One of the main goals in social interaction is to maintain and enhance face during conversation. In order to do so, speakers use strategies to minimize the threat involved in a determined action and thus, reestablish the interlocutor's face. Social interaction, then, requires the speaker and the hearer to learn to behave politely. But it was not until the late 1970's that politeness became a major concern in pragmatics. Traditional politeness theories such as the ones suggested by Brown and Levinson(1987), Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1983) have been the fundamental basis for any study of verbal politeness behavior for a long time. However, more recent studies on cross-cultural pragmatics, specifically, those involving non-western societies, have shown that traditional politeness theories are oversimplistic.

One of the main problems with these theories is that they tend to correlate politeness with indirectness. Brown and Levinson (1987) define politeness as a redressive action taken to counterbalance the disruptive effect of FTAs. They also believe that there are certain acts that are intrinsically face-threatening such as requests, suggestions, disapproval, criticisms, etc. In order to minimize these threats, Brown and Levinson suggest possible strategies based on an indirectness paradigm. Some of these strategies involve to do the act 'on record", that is, directly, effectively and clearly. Direct strategies, according to Brown and Levinson, can also signal positive or negative politeness. The former is oriented toward the positive face of the addressee and indicates that the speaker also considers the hearer's face and includes him in the group. Negative politeness, on the

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other hand, is addressed to satisfy the hearer's negative face by not interfering with his freedom of action. Brown and Levinson also argue that off-record strategies (i.e., indirect) are more polite than on-record strategies. They believe that off-record strategies are a natural expression of negative politeness since the speaker tries to avoid imposing on the hearer and thus, leave the hearer with his/her freedom of action. The relationship between indirectness and politeness has also been defended by Leech (1983) who suggested that degree of politeness increases by using a more and more indirect kind of illocution. According to Leech "indirect illocutions tend to be more polite (a) because they increase the degree of optionality, and (b) because the more indirect an illocution is, the more diminished and tentative its force tends to be" (p. 108).

One of the main problems with these traditional politeness theories is that there is not enough empirical evidence to support their claims. Besides, very commonly the evidence offered only includes isolated utterances without examining other elements in the interaction or in the speech act. Furthermore, these theories of politeness and their understanding of indirectness as the key to show polite behavior have been claimed to be universal patterns of language use. Yet, the claim to universality has been contested by researchers studying politeness in non-Western societies. According to Gu (1990) politeness in modern Chinese is more than an instrumental tool, as Brown and Levinson (1987) seem to defend. Instead, politeness is also normative and the breach of politeness principles will incur in social sanctions. One of the main deviations from traditional politeness theories when analyzing politeness phenomena in Chinese is the notion of negative face. In Chinese an offer or an invitation is not considered an act that threatens the negative face of the hearer.

Similarly, Matsumoto (1988,1989) in analyzing Japanese verbal interactions points out several deviations from traditional politeness theories. Matsumoto suggests that the underlying principle of all Japanese verbal interactions comprises concerns about belongingness, empathy, dependency, and reciprocity, contrary to the high value placed on

individualism in Western culture. Given the collective nature of Japanese culture, negative face wants seem negligible and cannot account for politeness. In fact, an utterance which is indirect and thus, less-face threatening, can be considered more impolite than an imperative sentence which shows the appropriate use of honorifics and speech level. Other studies are Clancy (1986), Ide (1989), Nwoye (1992).

In occidental cultures there also exist problems in trying to apply Brown and Levinson's model of politeness. Wierzbicka, (1985) argues that most pragmatic theories are based on an Anglo-Saxon model, which, consequently, does not work when applied to other languages. Wierzbicka draws all her observations from Polish interactional data but she claims that many other European languages differ from English in the ways indicated for Polish. According to her, the Anglo-Saxon tradition "places special emphasis on the autonomy of every individual, which abhors interference in other's people's affairs (*It's none of my business*), which is tolerant of individual idiosyncrasies and peculiarities, which respects everyone's privacy, which approves of compromises and disapproves of dogmatism of any kind" (1985, p. 30).

The use of the imperative in English reflects this sociocultural attitude. The English imperative is primarily used to perform commands or orders. For other types of directives, the tendency is to avoid the imperative or combine it with an interrogative and/or conditional form (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). In Polish, according to Wierzbicka, the imperative is used for a wider range of contexts. In fact, the use of the imperative is not directly related with impolite behavior. On the contrary, since interrogatives are very limited to the domain of questions, the imperative is preferred to express politeness when, for example, performing a request.

Cross-cultural studies of politeness behavior have also helped to understand the different cultural values underlying pragmatic principles such as politeness. Blum-Kulka (1990) in studying Israeli parental speech addressed to their children showed that parents chose between two modes when addressing their children: *solidarity politeness*, expressed

by mitigated directness, and *conventional politeness*, expressed through indirectness. Mitigated directness redresses face by showing solidarity and stressing involvement. On the other hand, by being conventional or non-conventional indirect, parents are using the socially normative discourse of non-involvement, and thus, redressing to negative face. In comparing Israeli parents with immigrants and American parents, Blum-Kulka found that the family discourse of the former was characterized by solidarity politeness, whereas the discourse of the immigrants and Americans involved a higher use of conventional politeness markers.

As we can see, the relationship between indirectness and politeness is not a clear one. Evidence form cross-cultural studies seems to show that the discourse domain, the social context where interaction takes place, and more importantly, the interlocutors' cultural values, determine politeness behavior. The purpose of the following study is to provide further cross-cultural evidence for the points raised here. The direct requests offered by members of two Western-societies, American English and Peninsular Spanish, will be examined on the basis of the type of politeness strategies manifested in the subjects' verbal behavior. Furthermore, the responses of proficient non-native speakers will also be studied and described to discover to what extent pragmatic principles such as politeness are transferable at the utterance level and/or the cultural level.

2. Study

2.1. Method

2.1.1 Population: The total number of subjects participating in this study was 104. There were three groups of undergraduate university students. One group of 37 native Spanish speakers from the University of Salamanca in Spain served as the native Spanish data. They were 34 females and 3 males, with a total mean age of 23. One group of 34 university students from the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana provided the native American English data. There were 24 females and 10 males, with a total mean age

of 20. Finally, the non-native data come from a group of 33 native Spanish speakers learning English as a foreign language. They were 29 females and 4 males, with a total mean age of 22. At the time of their participation in this study, these L2 learners were enrolled in their last year to graduate as English majors in the University of Barcelona, Spain, and thus, their proficiency level in English can be described as high-Intermediate or advanced. Additional information about the subjects language background was obtained by a short questionnaire. The mean number of years that these subjects have spent learning English is 9.4. A total of 85% of this population (i.e., 28 subjects out of 33) had been to an English speaking country for an average time of 2.2 months.

2.1.2. Materials and Procedure: The data were collected by means of a written open-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 24 situations where two contextual variables were combined: a) degree of social distance (=familiarity) between the speaker and the hearer, i.e., whether the speaker and the hearer know each other or not, and b) degree of social dominance (=power relationship) of the speaker towards the hearer, i.e., how powerful the speaker is towards the hearer. The familiarity factor had two levels: Familiar vs. Unfamiliar. The power factor had three levels: Powerful (Power+), no-power (Power=), and powerless (Power-). There were four situations representing each combination of social variables. In this paper, I decided to focus only on two contexts: Power+ and Power-. I selected these two conditions because they represent the two extremes in the social distance representing the relationship between the interlocutors (see Appendix A for a brief description of the situations used in this analysis).

Each situation in the questionnaire was followed by the question *What would you say?* to which the subjects had to respond as if they were the real speakers in the situation. However, they were told that if they did not want to say anything in a situation, they could do so but were encouraged to write down why they would not say anything. There were two versions of the questionnaire in which the order of appearance of the situations was different to counterbalance the effect of the beginning and end of the test.

Each version of the questionnaire had a parallel translation in Spanish and in English. The English questionnaire was given to the native English subjects in the United States and to the second language learners in Spain. The Spanish questionnaire was given to the native Spanish speakers in Spain.

2.1.3. Data Analysis: In order to identify direct requests, I followed the coding scheme used by Blum-Kulka and her colleagues in the CCSARP project (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989). This coding scheme classified requests in nine exclusive strategies based on a directness scale, which later were collapsed into three main categories: Direct, Conventional Indirect and Non-Conventional Indirect or Hints (refer to Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989, p. 18 for classification of the nine request strategies). For the purpose of this analysis, I will only focus on the direct request strategies offered by teh subjects in the questionnaire.

To classify responses as direct requests, the Head Act of the speech act was isolated as the minimal unit which can realize the request. In order to isolate the Head Act, other elements in the speech act, such as Alerters and Supportive Acts, were disregarded. However, since the goal of this analysis was to describe how politeness was signaled in the subjects' responses, the entire speech act response was studied. Politeness functions in these responses were primarily found in the use of supportive moves, the use of the politeness marker 'please', and the use of other elements such as attention getters. A detailed description of these components will be presented now.[2]

2.2. Results and Discussion.

2.2.1. Frequency of Direct Requests: Overall Spanish speakers used more direct requests than American speakers and L2 learners. The latter group tended to approximate

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[2] For the purpose of this presentation, no statistical analyses were conducted and only descriptive and qualitative analyses will be presented.

American standards by using more indirect types of illocutions, although they were more direct than native American English speakers who preferred to use conventional indirect requests across all situations.

Since the familiarity distinction did not produce very different results for this analysis, I decided to collapsed it. In Table 1, the frequency of use of Direct Requests offered by the subjects in the questionnaire are presented according to the two Power conditions examined here: [3]

Table 1: Frequency of Use of Direct Requests Across Contexts.

	Power+	Power-
Spanish L1	38%	16%
English L1	18%	4%
English L2	28%	11%

As we could have expected, overall speakers produced more direct requests in the power condition than in the powerless context. Also, Spanish speakers were the ones that offered the highest percentage of direct requests followed by L2 learners and native American English speakers respectively.

2.2.2. Type of Direct Request Strategy: When looking at the direct requests that these subjects offered in their responses, I realized that almost all the responses fell into three main categories: a) bare imperatives, b)Want statements, and c) a variation of the latter which I call a "softened want statement" such as in "I'd like you to do x". The distribution of these three main categories appears as follows in Table 2.

[3] The percentages were obtained by dividing the number of direct requests produced by the total number of subjects responding in the questionnaire.

Table 2: Type of Direct Strategies according to Contexts

	POWER+		POWER-		
	"Do x"	I want you to do x"	"Do x"	"I want you to do x"	"I'd like you to do x"
Spanish L1	22%	6%	1%	1%	11%
English L1	4%	12%	1%	--	2%
English L2	10%	13%	1%	2%	7%

The first thing to notice here is that the Softened Want statement form only appeared in the powerless condition. By using the conditional tense marker "I'd like", the speaker tries to minimize the degree of imposition of the request, which results in a more polite request utterance. The other two request forms are more direct since the speaker expresses his/her want/need to get the hearer to comply with the request without mitigating the impositive force involved in the speaker's desire. This 'softened' want statement was also more frequent in the Spanish data than in the English data. Actually, it was the second more preferred request form choice by the native Spanish group. Interestingly enough, in the Power+ context, native Spanish speakers preferred to use bare imperatives, which traditionally are considered the less polite forms, whereas native English speakers used Want statements. L2 learners, on the other hand, showed a typical interlanguage behavior by producing all types of requests forms and thus, approximating the native English standards but without distancing themselves from their native language rules.

The native Spanish speakers' use of bare imperatives to perform a request is very similar to the reported use for Polish speakers by Wierzbicka (1985). In the case of Peninsular Spanish, the results obtained here seem to suggest that Spanish and Polish

share similar cultural norms of speaking with regard to the use of imperatives to perform a request. The Anglo-Saxon model, according to Wierzbicka, dictates the use of imperatives to perform commands or orders, which explains the low frequency of use of this request form by the native English speakers in this study.

2.2.3. A "Personalized Verbal Pattern"

A closer look at the internal structure of the Head Act of the request started to reveal the type of politeness behavior that distinguishes Spanish speakers from native English speakers. Spanish speakers seem to prefer to use a type of politeness strategies that is closer to Blum-Kulka's 'solidarity politeness' or Brown and Levinson's 'positive politeness' where the speaker's intention is to satisfy the hearer's positive face by stressing his/her in-group membership. In Spanish these positive or solidarity politeness is expressed in different ways.

Spanish speakers tend to include the speaker in the request as the recipient of the action being requested by adding the indirect pronoun 'me'. This takes place in the three types of direct strategies reported above: bare imperatives, want statements, and softened want statements. Here are some examples:

1. Ayudame a ordenar los documentos, por favor. (S4, SL1)[4]
   (Help me to file these documents, please)
2. Me gustaría que me ayudaras. (S4, SL1)
   (I'd like you to help me)

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[4] The information between parenthesis must be read as follows: 1) S# indicates the situation number in the questionnaire from which the response was extracted and 2) EL1, EL2, SL1 indicate the language group, that is, EL1=English L1, native English speakers, EL2= English L2, English as a second language speakers and SL1= Spanish L1, native Spanish speakers. Please, note that each of all the response examples to be given in this paper will be identified according to this fashion.

3. Quédate después del trabajo para ayudarme a terminar el trabajo.(S1, SL1)

   (Stay after work to help me finish the report)

4. Hazme fotocopias de estos informes y envíalas a los clientes. (S3, SL1)

   (Make me photocopies of these reports and send them to the clients)

5. Tráeme dos tazas de café cuando puedas. (S2, SL1)

   (Bring me two cups of coffee when you are free)

6. Por favor, pásame este informe al ordenador. (S9, SL1)

   (Please, enter this report in the computer for me)

7. Traéme un bocadillo del comedor, por favor. (S11, SL1)

   (Bring me a sandwich from the cafeteria, please)

8. Necesito que me hagas fotocopias de estos informes y que los envies.

   (S3, SL1)

   (I need you to make me photocopies of these reports and send them out).

Interestingly, Spanish speakers produced direct requests which involved the speaker and the hearer as the performers of the action being requested. Particularly, this occurred in the context where the boss asks his/her secretary to help him/her to file the documents under a new system. Common Spanish requests were the following:

9. Durante estos dias vamos a dedicarnos a ordenar documentos. (S4, SL1)

   (These days were are going to organize files)

10. Estos documentos están muy desorganizados. Vamos a ordenarlos entre los dos. (S4, SL1)

    (These files are very unorganized. We are going to organize them together)

English speakers did not use these types of direct requests. Overall, English speakers were more impersonal in their responses. Very rarely the speakers included

themselves as the recipients of the action or mentioned the hearer in the request. Here are some examples of the type of responses most commonly produced by the native English group:

11. Sally, I need five copies of these reports and send them to these five clients. (S3, EL1)
12. I need this report copied and sent to these clients by the end of the day. (S3, EL1)
13. Make photocopies of this report. (S3, EL1)
14. I have this report that needs to get into the computer. (S9, EL1)
15. We'll need coffee in here, Jerry. Please, bring some. (S2, EL1)

The verbal behavior of the L2 learners with reference to the inclusion of the speaker in the request Head Act is better described as of typical learners who show some transfer from their L1 but still are able to approximate the TL standards. The frequency of use of this type of request structure provides the evidence for the cross-cultural and interlanguage argument claimed here. Around 50% of the Direct requests produced by native Spanish speakers included a reference to the speaker, such as in "Bring me coffee." Native English speakers included the speaker in 15% of the cases whereas L2 learners included the speaker in 25% of the cases.

The inclusion of the speaker in the request response is important because it personalizes the utterance. In responses where the speaker only refers to the action and its consequences or justifications, the hearer cannot relate the requested action to an individual and thus, the emphasis on the action becomes more impersonal and imposing. In the Anglo-Saxon society this more impersonal style may be perceived less imposing since the presence of the speaker as the main benefactor of the action cannot be considered as another justification for the action being requested. However, in the Peninsular Spanish culture, the

presence of the speaker does not seem to be viewed as an imposing element but instead it helps the hearer relate his/her actions to a specific individual, which places the hearer and the speaker at the same level as human beings with certain needs. Needless to say the argument presented here needs empirical verification. However, I would suggest that this personalized style observed in the Spanish and L2 data is indeed a manifestation of politeness rules.

In order to examine this issue in more detail, I decided to study the type of supportive moves offered in these responses more closely since they can function as politeness indicators because in producing them, the speaker's intention is to mitigate the degree of imposition of the action and thus, save the hearer's face.

Overall the three groups used the same amount of supportive moves in their direct requests across all situations (an average of 30%). The main difference between native Spanish and native English speakers were in the type of supportive moves they used. The use of Justifications or Explanations and Concern moves were the most illuminating. Specifically, I found interesting that Spanish speakers and L2 learners used around 20% of moves that showed Concern for the hearer, where native English speakers showed Concern only 9%.[5]

Table 14: Frequency of Use of Minimizing Supportive Moves in the Direct Requests in Power+ and Power-

	Concern	Justifications	Other
English L1	9%	67%	24%
Spanish L1	22%	45%	27%
English L2	21%	46%	28%

[5] These percentages were calculated by dividing the total number of each type of supportive moves by the total number of direct requests offered by each group.

Under the Concern strategy I included not only those utterances which clearly show concern for the hearer's ability to comply with the request, but also utterances which are addressed to request the speaker's approval of the action and his/her willingness to comply with the request. In some cases, these concern strategies could be interpreted as conventional indirect requests if performed in another context. However, since in my data the concern move was added at the end of the speech act after the direct request was already produced, I interpreted this move as a supportive strategy, rather than as the Head Act of the speech act.

Since Concern moves were not very often produced by native English speakers, generalizations about their use need to be taken with caution. However, the few instances where Concern moves were produced in the native English data seem to reflect the speaker's concern for the hearer's ability to carry out the act. In contrast, Spanish speakers in their L1 and particularly in their L2, offered Concern moves which reflected the speaker's concern not only for the hearer's ability but also the hearer's willingness to comply with the request. Here are some examples:

16. *Si no es molestia*, me gustaría que leyera este trabajo. Me interesa mucho su opinión (S7, SL1)
    (If it does not bother you, I would like you to read this paper. I am very interested in your opinion).
17. Necesito que me ayude mañana sábado a redactar un informe que necesito con urgencia. *¿Hay algún problema?* (S10, SL1)
    (I need you to help me to write an urgent report tomorrow Saturday. Is there any problem?)
18. Antonio, necesito que te encargues de reservarme un billete de avión. *No te importa hacerme este favor, verdad?* (S12, SL1)

(Antonio, I need you to reserve a plane ticket for me. You don't mind doing me this favor, do you?)

19. Hello! I would like you to take a look at my paper, *if you don't mind.* (S7, EL2)
20. I need you to type this report for me. *Would you be so kind?* Thank you very much (S9, EL2)
21. I need you to type the report. I did something wrong last night. *Would you do it for me?* (S9, EL2)
22. Excuse me, I would like you to read this article and give your opinion, *would you mind, please?* (S16, EL2)
23. I need you to file the documents according to this new system. *Let me know if you need any help.* (S4, EL1)
24. I've written a report on X and would love for you to look it over. *Do you think you have time?* (S16, EL1)

In examples 16. to 22., the content of the Concern moves addresses the hearer's willingness to carry out the action being requested whereas in the native English examples, 23. and 24., the nature of the Concern moves seems to be more closely associated with the hearer's ability to comply with the request. There is a difference between these 'willingness' and 'ability' Concern moves types. Moves that are concerned with the hearer's ability to carry out the requested action question any potential obstacles that may interfere with the addressee's undertaking of the action (e.g., time constraints, knowledge about the task, etc.). In contrast, 'willingness' Concern moves are intended to emphasize the individuality of the hearer by considering his/her right to preserve his/her freedom to act. In that sense, these Concern moves become more personal forms of expression by showing solidarity with the hearer.

The use of Justifications or Explanations was favored by Native English speakers who produced the highest percentage of use. Specifically, 67% of the native English direct requests included a Justification move, in comparison with the 46% and 35% of the L2 learners and native Spanish speakers respectively. Here are some examples of Explanations moves in Direct request strategies:

25. You won't believe this, but your new boss made one of these big mistakes. I *forgot to save this report last night.* I have it printed, I just need it retyped with the changes by this afternoon. (S9, EL1)
26. *I'm going out of town next week,* and I need you to make reservations for this hotel..... (S12, EL1)

The us of Explanations as politeness indicators is motivated by the fact that the speaker tries to mitigate the imposition of the request by providing the justifications that led him/her to perform the request. Consequently, the speaker offers the rationale or the circumstantial evidence for the requested action which proves that the request is not the result of the speaker's egocentric desires.

In comparing Justifications and Concern moves, it is clear that the former are more impersonal than the latter. As mentioned earlier, there is a big difference between native English speakers and native Spanish speakers and L2 learners with regard to the type of supportive moves offered to mitigate the imposition of the Direct requests. Whereas native English speakers preferred to stress the circumstances that led them to produce the requesting action, native Spanish speakers and L2 learners were more concerned with the hearer's feelings and thus, preferred to support their responses with moves that directly addressed the hearer as an individual. The use of Concern moves to mitigate the imposition of the action is undoubtedly a politeness strategy, which, very interestingly, does not seem to be shared by the native English speakers. Nonetheless, the difference in the type of

supportive moves used by these three languages groups, seems to provide more evidence for the type of "personalized verbal behavior" that seems to describe Spanish speakers' use of direct requests.

Another piece of evidence that supports this claim is found in the use of Alerters in the subjects' responses. In the coding scheme of the CCSARP project data, Alerters are defined as "an element whose function is to alert the Hearer's attention to the ensuing speech act" (1989, p. 277) such as the use of the title or role of the hearer (e.g., Professor), the name or surname of the hearer (e.g., John), or an attention getter (e.g., excuse me, pardon). After analyzing the data, I realized that Alerters were not only used to alert the hearer of the uncoming request but also to get closer to the hearer and thus, show in-group involvement. The frequency distribution of these Alerters across the three language groups is as follows: native English speakers used Alerters in 18% of their Direct requests, native Spanish speakers used them in 36% and L2 learners in 60%.

The use of names to alert the hearer is the most clear example of Alerters intended to show involvement and a more personal and intimate interaction. Very interestingly, of the 18% of Alerters used by native English speakers, 13% were names. Similarly of the 36% of Alerters of the native Spanish speakers, 20% were names and of the 60% of the L2 Alerters, 52% were names. As these results show, native Spanish speakers and L2 learners in particularly used names much more often than the native English group, which again provides evidence for the group-involvement or personalized verbal style characteristic of the Spanish population in this study. Similarly to the case of Alerters, the highest percentage of use of *please* appeared in the L2 data (30%), followed by the native Spanish data (22%) and the native English one (13%).

These results clearly show a cross-cultural difference with regard to the use of the politeness marker *please* and the use of Alerters in Peninsular Spanish and American English. But more interestingly, L2 learners seem to deviate from both cultural parameters

by including these two politeness indicators in their responses much more frequently than the other two groups.

One possible explanation for the L2 learners' frequent use of these two lexical forms may reside in their L1. Native Spanish speakers also produced these two lexical forms more often than native English speakers which may have caused L2 learners to transfer their L1 usage into the TL. However, if transfer was the motivating force, why did L2 learners produce these forms more frequently than the Native Spanish speakers? The answer can be found in the low propositional content of these lexical forms which allows the L2 learners to use them more freely and comfortably. One of the main concerns when speaking a second language is to be polite or at least to sound polite. Depending on the proficiency level of the learner, different methods can be used to achieve this goal. As more proficient the leaner gets, more sophisticated politeness strategies are produced such as the use of complex and varied supportive moves or specific syntactic structures such as negation or use of the conditional to mitigate the imposition of the act. However, a typical interlanguage behavior is characterized by the use of more simple politeness strategies such as *please* or Alerters. These two expressions are acquired very easily by the learners because of their low propositional content and their flexible placement rules in the utterance.[6]

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[6] In the direct requests analyzed in this section, native English speakers decided to use *please* only at the beginning of their responses. Native Spanish speakers also used *por favor (please)* at initial sentence position (62%) but middle (6%) and end positions (25%) were also accepted although less frequently. In the case of L2 learners, subjects clearly preferred initial sentence placement (83%) and only in a few cases, *please* was placed at the end of the response (14%). Due to the limited frequency of use of *please* by native English speakers, it is difficult to reach any conclusion about the appropriate use of this politeness indicator in Direct requests. However, based on these results, it seems that although L2 learners are aware of the appropriate position of *please* in Direct requests, they still show interference from their L1 rules into their L2 production by placing *please* at the end of the utterance in some cases.

3. Conclusion

As a matter of conclusion, I would like to stress several points. First, these results have shown that the traditional thinking that directness and politeness is incompatible cannot be maintained anymore. Specifically, the Spanish data analyzed here provides evidence for the claim that positive politeness and on-record strategies are not two opposing components. As we have seen, in the case of Peninsular Spanish a different type of politeness behavior seems to be taken place in everyday interchanges. The direct requests of this group were characterized by a verbal pattern intended to stress the hearer as an individual by considering his/her needs and freedom of action and including him/her in the interaction. The use of Alerters or Concern moves is a good example.

Spanish speakers also personalized their direct requests by including the speaker in the speech act as the recipient of the request. In contrast, native English speakers were more impersonal in their responses and avoided this strategy. The inclusion of the speaker does not necessarily show in-group membership towards the hearer but it is an attempt to personalize the action being requested by referring to the hearer and the speaker as real individuals in the interaction. This more personal verbal behavior is indeed a politeness indicator but also a persuasive one. The mitigation involved in any type of politeness behavior is not only intended to save the interlocutor's face but at the same time persuade the hearer to comply with the request.

The type of politeness encountered in Peninsular Spanish is an example of Positive Politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and Solidarity Politeness (Blum-Kulka, 1990). In a sense, the use of Concern moves, Alerters and other supportive moves were intended to show consideration for the hearer's face by showing respect for the hearer's independence and also by showing in-group involvement. However, the inclusion of the speaker as the recipient of the action in the Direct request is difficult to explain only in these terms. This is why I decided to call this verbal behavior a 'personalized' verbal style because the speaker

relates the action being requested to a particular individual. The speaker's consideration for the hearer's face goes beyond than simply showing respect or group-involvement, which makes this verbal pattern very unique.

As Wierzbicka (1985) explained, 'what is at issue is not just different ways of expressing politeness, but different cultural values" (p. 61). The Anglo-Saxon culture places special emphasis on the autonomy of the individual, whereas similarly to the Polish culture, the Spanish culture and probabaly all Mediterranean cultures, are characterized by showing group-involvement, warmth and affection. Each culture has its own ways of expressing these cultural values which explains why Spanish speakers and native English speakers have shown different politeness strategies. Furthermore, since cultural values is what underlines the subjects' verbal behavior, it is understandable that L2 learners show verbal patterns that are characteristic of their L1. Since these subjects are unaware of the nature of certain Anglo-Saxon cultural values, they simply transfer their own values into the TL. Interestingly, however, learners still feel the need to be more polite in their TL and thus, decide to overuse simple lexical forms commonly associated with politeness, such as Alerters and *please*.

Finally, I would like to point out that this analysis was only concerned with those lexical forms which function as mitigators in the direct requests offered by the subjects. These mitigators were described as politeness indicators. However, how effective their politeness functions are to show mitigation and considerateness for the hearer's face can only be answered by the hearer in the interaction. Consequently, the politeness strategies and the cultural values outlined in this paper need to be taken only as possible indicators of cross-cultural verbal styles which need to be studied more thoroughly and systematically.

Appendix A

Familiar/Power+: A boss asks his/her secretary 1) to stay after office hours to work on a report, 2) to prepare some coffee and bring it to the office, 3) to make photocopies of a report and send them to some clients, 4)to help him/her file documents under a new system.

Familiar/Power-: A student asks his/her professor 5) for a ride home, 6) for an extension on a paper, 7) to read a paper the student has written for a conference and give an opinion on it, 8) to lend him/her a library book that the professor has.

Unfamiliar/Power+: A boss asks his/her new secretary 9) to type a report, 10) to come to the office on Saturday morning to work on a report, 11) to bring him/her a sandwich from the cafeteria, 12) to make plane and hotel reservations.

Unfamiliar/Power-: A student asks his/her new professor 13) for an assignment, 14) to lend him/her a book that just came out, 15) for a copy of a conference paper the professor has written, and 16) to read a paper that the student has written for a journal and give an opinion on it.

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