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What, When and How? Spanish Native and Nonnative Uses of Politeness

¿Qué, cuándo y cómo? El uso de la cortesía por hablantes nativos y no nativos de español

Abstract: The current study reports on three role-plays investigating the understanding and uses of politeness by native speakers of Spanish from Spain, native speakers of English from the United States, and nonnative speakers of Spanish from the United States. Motivated by the different characterization of Peninsular Spanish and U.S. American cultures as *solidarity* and *distancing cultures*, respectively (Hickey, 2005; Pinto, 2011), we expected that American English speakers would be more inclined towards the use of politeness strategies linked to the protection of face, while Spaniards would make more use of maneuvers to enhance face. The pertinent research question is whether learners transfer into L2 their L1 preference for face-saving, or, conversely, are able to adapt their behavior depending on the language of the interaction. Our results show that, overall, nonnative speakers still abide by the norms of their L1 to some extent, attaching more importance to the avoidance of face-threats when speaking in Spanish than native speakers do, although this preference tends to become less marked as their proficiency in the L2 increases.

Keywords: interlanguage pragmatics, Peninsular Spanish, U.S. American English, face-saving, face-enhancing, role-plays

Resumen: A partir del análisis de tres juegos de rol, el presente estudio explora el concepto y uso de la cortesía por hablantes nativos de español peninsular, hablantes nativos de inglés estadounidense, y hablantes no nativos de español procedentes de Estados Unidos. Debido a la caracterización que se ha venido haciendo de las culturas española y estadounidense como culturas de solidaridad y de distanciamiento, respectivamente (Hickey, 2005; Pinto, 2011), partimos de la hipótesis de que los informantes de origen estadounidense harán un mayor uso de las estrategias corteses relacionadas con la protección de la ima-

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gen, mientras que los informantes españoles preferirán las estrategias de cortesía vinculadas al fomento de la imagen. La pregunta de investigación que nos planteamos aquí es si los aprendices de español estadounidenses transfieren a la L2 su preferencia por la protección de la imagen o si, por el contrario, son capaces de adaptar su comportamiento dependiendo de la lengua que utilicen. Los resultados de nuestro estudio muestran que, en general, los informantes no nativos están aún influenciados por las normas de su L1, por lo que otorgan una mayor importancia a la mitigación y reparación de amenazas a la imagen, en comparación con la importancia otorgada por los hablantes nativos de español. No obstante, esta importancia tiende a estar menos marcada conforme aumenta el nivel de competencia de los hablantes no nativos en la L2.

Palabras clave: pragmática de la interlingua, español peninsular, inglés estadounidense, protección de la imagen, fomento de la imagen, juegos de rol

DOI 10.1515/soprag-2014-0017

1 Introduction

In their seminal 1978 essay, Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 245) drew a distinction between *negative* and *positive politeness cultures*. In the former, politeness strategies are predominantly based on generating respect and social differentiation, while the latter predominantly use politeness strategies to display affection and solidarity between interlocutors. Based on this distinction, a number of taxonomies of cultures have been proposed. For instance, Haverkate (2004) differentiates between *distancing* and *rapprochement/solidarity cultures*, and Briz (2006) uses Bravo's (1999) notions of *autonomy* and *affiliation*[1] *to talk about +/− autonomy* and *+/− affiliation cultures*. Research typically places U.S. American culture under the former, i.e. within a group of cultures that prioritize protecting and respecting the interlocutor's individuality and right to autonomy, and Peninsular Spanish culture under the latter, i.e. within a group of cultures showing more concern for solidarity and for constituting/enhancing face (García, 1989; Koike, 1994; Díaz Pérez, 2003; Haverkate, 2004; Hickey, 2005; Ardila, 2005; Briz, 2006; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; Pinto, 2011; Goddard, 2012).

In addition to differences in politeness orientation in U.S. American and Peninsular Spanish cultures, research has claimed that the content of face in

1 For a definition of these two concepts, see section "Theoretical Background and Research Questions" below.

the two cultures is different. Peninsular Spanish face is described as, predominantly, the need for positive self-affirmation and being treated with familiarity and closeness (Bravo, 1999; Hernández Flores, 1999, 2003; Bernal, 2007), while Anglo-American face is seen primarily as the desire not to be imposed upon (Brown & Levinson's definition of *negative face*, 1987, p. 61), and, only secondarily, as the desire to be liked, appreciated, and approved of (Brown & Levinson's definition of *positive face*, 1987, p. 61).

Clearly, any distinctions in this respect (cultural orientations of politeness and contents of face) are rough-grained, glossing over inherent variability within national cultures (e.g., East and West-coast Americans, cf. Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 245). However, as analysts we need not necessarily shy away from generalizations, as these can be useful in explaining the bases for participants' own expectations and stereotypes. Rather, we should strive to uncover speakers' own generalizations and to formulate them in a non-essentialist spirit. It is in such a spirit that in the present study we analyze the use of politeness by native English speakers from the United States, native Spanish speakers from Spain, and nonnative Spanish speakers from the United States. Our aim is to compare native and nonnative performances with respect to politeness, and to propose explanations for potential divergences, especially when those divergences could lead to miscomprehension of the target language/culture.

2 Theoretical Background and Research Questions

To account for the different contents of face in Peninsular Spanish and U.S. American cultures, we use Bravo's (1999, 2008) distinction between *autonomy* and *affiliation* face. In Bravo's (2008, p. 588) words, autonomy refers "to how a person wishes to see him or herself and to be seen by others as an individual with a 'contour' of its own within a group," and affiliation "to how a person wishes to see him or herself and to be seen by others with features that identify him or her with the group." Coming to the two cultures of concern to us here, Bravo (2008, p. 588) explains that Peninsular Spanish autonomy face is described as, predominantly, the need for positive self-affirmation, which is a concept linked to the notion of honor and to showing one's personal value; while Spanish affiliation face is described as being treated with *confianza*, that is, with mutual trust and closeness. With regard to Anglo-American autonomy and affiliation face, Bravo (2008, p. 588) states that these two categories would be filled with Brown and Levinson's definition of negative face and positive face (see previous section), respectively.

Our starting point in this article is the idea that the different contents of face in U.S. American and Peninsular Spanish cultures motivate different conceptualizations and thus uses of politeness, with Peninsular Spanish being more inclined toward the use of maneuvers to enhance face (Face-Enhancing Acts – FEAs) and U.S. American culture toward the protection of face through the avoidance/mitigation of Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs). However, as Barros García and Terkourafi (2014, p. 2) explain, "this does not imply a complete dichotomy but rather a difference in the relative importance and frequency in each culture of maneuvers to constitute and reinforce face or, conversely, to protect face."

U.S. American and Peninsular Spanish speakers' preferences for different politeness strategies in interaction give rise to the following questions:

1. How do learners of Spanish from the U.S.A. learn about the opposing preferences and uses of politeness in the L2?
2. Are they able to switch from their native Anglo-American politeness norms to the foreign ones when interacting in Spanish?
3. If so, does the learners' level of proficiency influence/affect their perception and use of politeness in the foreign language?
4. What aspects of Spanish politeness are easier/more challenging for them to learn?

We sought to answer these questions by comparing the performance of nonnative speakers to that of native speakers in three role-plays, investigating whether their performance is more similar to that of English native speakers interacting in English, or that of Spanish native speakers interacting in Spanish. Ultimately, our goal is to find out whether nonnative speakers transfer their L1 politeness norms into the L2 or are able to adapt to L2 norms, and what this depends on.

3 Methodology

Participants were recruited on a voluntary basis between February 2012 and February 2013 at three different institutions: the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A., Knox College, U.S.A., and the University of Granada, Spain. According to the information they provided, all of the informants (N = 66, 43 female and 23 male) were graduate or undergraduate students majoring in various subjects at the aforementioned institutions, aged 18-33 at the time of the study (mean age 22.71, *SD* = 3.802). In total, 12 Spanish Native Speakers (SNS) from Spain, 11 English Native Speakers (ENS) from the U.S.A., and 43 Non-Native

Table 1: Participant groups

Group label	Group size	Proficiency level	Country of origin
SNS	12	Native	Spain
ENS	11	Native	U.S.A.
NNSS	14	Novice	U.S.A. (English L1)
	14	Intermediate	
	15	Advanced	

Speakers of Spanish (NNSS) from the U.S.A., whose native language was English, took part in the research. NNSS included 14 novice, 14 intermediate, and 15 advanced learners (see table 1).

NNSSs' level of proficiency was determined based on University of Illinois and Knox College guidelines, which define a novice speaker as a student who has taken at least one Spanish introductory course at either the high school or college level or equivalent, and is or has been enrolled in an elementary Spanish course. Students in the intermediate group had been or were enrolled in courses for returning learners from the elementary level, or for students who took a placement test and showed basic skills in the L2. Finally, students in the advanced group were enrolled in upper-level Spanish courses, had returned from study abroad, or had work experience in the language. In addition, NNSSs' level of proficiency was assessed informally by one of the researchers (MJBG) during a short interaction that preceded the role-play.

Before data were collected, informants were given a short explanation about the research procedures and goals of the study. They were told that this was a study on interaction strategies used by people speaking Spanish and English. All participants consented to participate in writing, and anonymity was guaranteed.

Participants took part in two different tasks: a written questionnaire and role-plays. This combination of tasks was intended to provide us with information about what participants *think* that they do and what they *actually* do in interaction. In this way, we aimed to identify potential disparities between the two while circumventing known weaknesses of self-reporting (Rose, 1994, p. 9-10) and still obtaining broadly comparable data by the same population of participants. The written questionnaire was designed to study informants' metapragmatic knowledge about politeness, and to provide empirical support for the psychological reality of the differences between Peninsular Spanish and U.S. American cultures noted previously (see the two sections above). It included questions such as defining a polite speaker, comparing American English and Peninsular Spanish politeness norms, listing strategies that participants use

when trying to be polite to different addressees, ranking the importance of politeness in different types of relationships, and ranking the importance of communicative behaviors closely associated with either the production of FEAs or the avoidance/mitigation of FTAs. The metapragmatic data obtained by means of the written questionnaire provided information about the expectations, self-perception and reported performance of ENS, SNS and NNSS. It thus helped us to gain access into first-order understandings of politeness by these three types of informants, and confirmed previous characterizations of U.S. American and Peninsular Spanish as more inclined towards the use of face-saving vs. face-enhancing strategies, respectively. The full results of the questionnaire study are reported in Barros and Terkourafi (2014).

After completing the written questionnaire, all informants were given appointments to participate in open role-plays. Informants were matched in pairs by type of informant and level of proficiency – i.e., one ENS with one ENS, one SNS with one SNS, one novice NNSS with one novice NNSS, and so on. This methodology replicates that used by Márquez Reiter (2000, p. 140) in her study of requests and apologies in British English and Uruguayan Spanish and has several advantages. To begin with, it can help prevent participants being potentially 'led on' by the investigator toward particular structures or strategies s/he may have expected them to use, while at the same time also guarding against entrainment in investigator speech, which may result from repeated role-playing of the same scenario. Additionally, it enabled us to avoid introducing further variability into the data by appointing independent fieldworkers to conduct the role-plays. Given we are dealing with two languages, at least two such individuals would be required – a native speaker of English to collect the ENS data and a native speaker of Spanish to collect the SNS and NNSS data – making it impossible to control the influence of their speech on the collected data. Such a move would have, moreover, reduced the data of interest to one participant per role-play – the one who was not a fieldworker – requiring us to recruit twice as many participants in order to collect the same amount of data. Our choice of methodology thus reflected both theoretical and practical considerations.

Meetings took place in small classrooms on campus. Upon arrival, participants were given short written descriptions of scenarios as well as oral instructions:

- Role-play #1: Informant 1 (I1) is having trouble with a course and at the end of class shares his/her worries with another classmate; Informant 2 (I2) listens to I1 who tells him/her that s/he is finding it hard to follow a course.
- Role-play #2 (two scenes): for the first scene, I1 invites a friend home for dinner, and I2 is invited over for dinner at a friend's place; for the second scene, informants are at I1's house, where I1 has to act as a host, and I2 as a guest.

Table 2: Pairs of informants participating in the 3 scenarios presented

Group label	Proficiency level	Role-play #1	Role-play #2	Role-play #3
SNS	Native	6	6	6
ENS	Native	6	6	6
NNSS	Novice	7	7	8
	Intermediate	7	7	6
	Advanced	9	7	7
TOTAL: 101 role-plays		35	33	33

– Role-play #3: I1 needs his/her final exam date to be changed and meets with the professor during his/her office hours to see if this change is possible; I2 is a professor and one of his/her students comes to his/her office hours to see if s/he can take the final exam on a different date.

Once participants had chosen a role (I1 or I2), they were given a few minutes to think about what they would say if they were talking in Spanish with a Spanish native speaker (for NNSS and SNS), or in English with an English native speaker (for ENS). Although the researchers were not involved in the role-plays, they stayed in the room in order to record them and to check for possible misunderstandings of the instructions.

Not all informants role-played all three scenarios presented above – some role-played just one, some two, and most of them all three. All informants agreed to be video-recorded. Role-plays yielded a total of 177 minutes and 34 seconds of recorded material. Information about the number of role-plays performed by each group is summarized in table 2, and the distribution of recorded material can be found in table 3.

Videorecordings were transcribed using the Val.Es.Co. transcription system (Briz & Grupo Val.Es.Co., 2002). Datasheets precede every transcription and summarize all relevant information about the recordings (e.g., date and place of

Table 3. Sample size and distribution of recordings

NNSS	ENS	SNS
22 role-plays by beginners 41′45″	18 role-plays, 32′30″	18 role-plays, 29′39″
20 role-plays by intermediate 23′20″		
23 role-plays by advanced 50′10″		
SUB-TOTAL: 65 role-plays, 115′25″		
TOTAL: 101 role-plays, 177′34″ of recordings		

the recording, recording code) and the informants recorded (e.g., age, nationality, level of Spanish). Pseudonyms are used for the participants in all transcriptions and datasheets.

4 Role-Play Analysis

Role-plays were designed to tap into informants' use of politeness in formal and informal situations. To limit the artificiality of the task, we took special care to present participants with realistic scenarios and roles that they might play in real life, as well as situations that were familiar to them, rather than completely new, so as to emulate as closely as possible their experience in real settings (see descriptions in previous section – "Methodology").

By tracking their conversational behavior in certain scenarios and the choice of moves/speech acts, the sequential organization of these acts and their linguistic realization, role-plays were intended to help us find out whether informants' behavior indeed reflects the views expressed in the written questionnaire or, conversely, the first-order understandings expressed in writing reflect positions that are idealized and theoretical in nature – aiming to constitute participants' face vis-à-vis the researchers – rather than implemented in actual practice. Data from the role-plays further helps us highlight potential instances of interference from English when nonnative speakers try to be polite in Spanish.

In what follows, we present the results of the analysis of the role-plays, with illustrative examples from all groups of informants. Utterances were categorized as particular types of moves (e.g., asking for help, offering help) based on their lexico-grammatical make-up as well as the listener's uptake. The most significant patterns were identified based on frequency counts and selected for analysis. However, the nature of our data precluded the use of inferential statistics for several reasons, starting with sampling procedures: participants self-selected – they volunteered to participate in this project – , so our samples of ENS, SNS and NNSS cannot in any way be claimed to be representative of the populations of ENS, SNS and NNSS at large. Moreover, precise variables were not set in advance. Rather, our analysis was exploratory, aiming to identify potential differences in the three groups' handling of the three scenarios and their possible sources. Any p-value reported would therefore have been invalid, because it would not have been motivated by a priori assumptions.[2] To avoid

2 In taking care not to treat our observational data as experimental, we follow Simmons, Nelson and Simonsohn (2011), who explain how costly errors in research, especially *false positives*, can be.

these pitfalls, in what follows we summarize our data using descriptive statistics measures, while at the same time we hope that our findings will help form the basis for future experiments designed to obtain p-values.

Role-Play #1: Student in Trouble with a Course

For role-play #1, I1s were asked to share with a classmate their troubles with a course, and I2s were asked to react to these concerns. This scenario generated different interactions, the most important ones being I1s expressly asking for help or advice, and I2s offering help or giving advice. Both offers of help and advice are speech acts intended to benefit the recipient. However, there is an important difference between them: a piece of advice is a directive that outlines a specific course of action and is intended to tell the addressee what is best for him/her (Searle, 1969, p. 67; see example 1), whereas an offer of help is a commissive that simply makes the speaker available to the other person to help (see examples 2 and 3). In this sense, a piece of advice threatens the *hearer's* autonomy face in U.S. American culture, by restricting his/her freedom of action – although less so than a request does (cf. Searle 1969, p. 67) – , while an offer of help threatens the *speaker's* autonomy face by committing him/her to a future course of action. This asymmetry and the fact that Spanish autonomy face is described differently (see section above – "Theoretical Background and Research Questions") are pertinent to the different preferences for these two speech acts by ENS, NNSS and SNS reported below.

(1) You could talk to other students who are doing well in the class
[ENS: 13228-104607.4[3]]

(2) *Podemos ir juntos a este grupo de estudios*
'We can go together to this study group'
[advanced NNSS: VID000010.10]

(3) *¿Cómo puedo ayudarte?*
'How can I help you?'
[advanced NNSS: 16 y 14.8]

The distribution of these moves – i.e., requests for help/advice, offers of help/advice – in the recorded role-plays is displayed in tables 4 and 5. Percentages indicate how frequently informants in the role of I1 (table 4) or I2 (table 5) made use of a particular move, out of the total number of moves by group.

3 Information about the type of speaker is provided in square brackets, followed, after the semicolon, by the conversation key code. The number after the period indicates the line of the conversation where the example in quotes comes from. English translations are given in single quotation marks. All translations are our own.

Table 4: Percentage of I1s who expressly asked for help and/or advice in RP #1[4]

Group	Help	Advice	Help and advice	Total
ENS	16.7% (n = 1)	33.3% (n = 2)	16.7% (n = 1)	66.7% (N = 6)
Novice NNSS	–	14.3% (n = 1)	–	14.3% (N = 7)
Intermediate NNSS	14.3% (n = 1)	14.3% (n = 1)	–	28.6% (N = 7)
Advanced NNSS	–	22.2% (n = 2)	22.2% (n = 2)	44.4% (N = 9)
SNS	33.3% (n = 2)	–	16.7% (n = 1)	50% (N = 6)
All Groups	11.4% (n = 4)	17.2% (n = 6)	11.4% (n = 4)	40% (Grand N = 35)

Table 5: Percentage of I2s who offered help and/or advice in RP #1

Group	Help	Advice	Help and advice	Total
ENS	–	83.3% (n = 5)	–	83.3% (N = 6)
Novice NNSS	28.6% (n = 2)	57.1% (n = 4)	14.3% (n = 1)	100% (N = 7)
Intermediate NNSS	28.6% (n = 2)	57.1% (n = 4)	14.3% (n = 1)	100% (N = 7)
Advanced NNSS	22.2% (n = 2)	44.4% (n = 4)	33.3% (n = 3)	100% (N = 9)
SNS	50% (n = 3)	16.7% (n = 1)	33.3% (n = 2)	100% (N = 6)
All Groups	25.7% (n = 9)	51.4% (n = 18)	20% (n = 7)	97.1% (Grand N = 35)

Comparing these two tables, we see that, despite the fact that less than half of I1s expressly asked for advice or help (40%), almost all I2s (97.1%) chose to acknowledge I1s' problems and offered their help and/or advice to them. Recall here that in the instructions I2 were simply asked to listen to I1s' woes. Therefore, I2s' offer of help or advice is a meaningful choice in this regard.

Our analysis revealed different patterns for the five groups of I2s. On the one hand, advanced NNSS and SNS were almost equally inclined to provide solutions to I1s' problems right after hearing about them, and to offer help or advice after I1s asked for it: 100% of these participants offered help and/or advice to I1s, although only 44.4% of advanced NNSS and 50% of SNS had expressly asked for it. Lower-level NNSS, on the other hand, favored giving advice and making suggestions without being expressly asked for it: 85.7% of novice NNSS and 71.4% of intermediate NNSS did this. This difference in the behavior of higher and lower-level NNSS in the role of I2 could be the result of advanced

4 N represents the total number of informants in each group; n represents the number of informants using each move; Grand N equals the total number of informants participating in the role-play.

NNSS's greater familiarity with Spanish norms, but it could also be due to the greater discourse structural complexity of asking for help or advice and of responding to such requests. Researching the behavior of English L2 learners, Trosborg (1995, p. 229) similarly observed that uncertainty about how to phrase a request in an appropriate way often led nonnative speakers to be more indirect than they otherwise intended to, only "hinting" at what they wanted rather than phrasing their request on record. Finally, ENS mainly offered help/advice to I1s after being expressly asked for it (66.7%). This last result could be suggesting that unsolicited advice may be interpreted negatively by native speakers of English. As Locher (2006, p. 52) explains, in a culture more oriented towards the individual's privacy and independence, such as U.S. American culture, unsolicited advice and offers of help could be interpreted as very face-threatening, because the addressee is placed in the position of being told to do something, which limits his/her freedom of action.

According to Bardovi-Harlig (2001, p. 14–20), one way in which L2 speakers depart from identifiable L1 norms is in producing utterances that reflect the choice of a different speech act in the same context. In our data (cf. table 5), 50% of SNS preferred to offer help rather than advice (16.7%), which conversely was the preferred speech act of ENS (83.3%). In addition, ENS never offered help. Halfway between the two groups of native speakers, NNSS I2s offered comparatively fewer pieces of advice than SNS (57.1% by novices and intermediates, 44.4% by advanced NNSS) and increased their number of offers of help (28.6% by novices and intermediates, 22.2% by advanced NNSS) in comparison with ENS (0%). Offers of help are thought to potentially threaten the addressee's negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 66), because they place him/her under an obligation to return the favor. Additionally, offering help is a more imposing behavior on the speaker than giving advice is, or, at least, more time consuming. This could explain why ENS and NNSS favored the speech act of advice over offers of help in role-play #1.

The interpretation of a piece of advice as more or less face-threatening has been claimed to depend on the context of use and the culture at hand (Hernández Flores, 1999; Ballesteros Martín, 2001; Bordería García, 2006, among others). In a culture oriented towards establishing and maintaining solidarity between interlocutors, such as Peninsular Spanish culture, "a piece of advice could be seen as [a] friendly comment that shows like or concern for the well-being of the receiver, thus being a kind of face-enhancing act" (Bordería García, 2006, p. 23). The different face-threatening/face-enhancing interpretations of the speech act of advice also impact the strategies used in its linguistic realization. In the data, differences were found in terms of the strategies preferred by each group (see table 6).

Table 6: Percentage of occurrence of different linguistic strategies in advice in RP #1[5]

Group	Declaratives	Interrogatives	Imperatives	Indirect	Other	Total
ENS	66.6% (k = 12)	5.6% (k = 1)	–	22.2% (k = 4)	5.6% (k = 1)	24% (K = 18)
Novice NNSS	31.2% (k = 5)	18.8% (k = 3)	12.4% (k = 2)	18.8% (k = 3)	18.8% (k = 3)	21.3% (K = 16)
Intermediate NNSS	27.3% (k = 3)	18.2% (k = 2)	18.2% (k = 2)	36.3% (k = 4)	–	14.7% (K = 11)
Advanced NNSS	57.9% (k = 11)	10.5% (k = 2)	10.5% (k = 2)	5.3% (k = 1)	15.8% (k = 3)	25.3% (K = 19)
SNS	18.2% (k = 2)	9.1% (k = 1)	72.7% (k = 8)	–	–	14.7% (K = 11)
All groups	44% (k = 33)	12% (k = 9)	18.6% (k = 14)	16% (k = 12)	9.4% (k = 7)	100% (Grand K = 75)

Table 6 shows that SNS generally preferred more direct strategies for the linguistic realization of advice, such as the use of the imperative mood, which was used almost 3 out of 4 times by them (72.7% ; example 4). On the other hand, ENS, advanced NNSS, and novice NNSS preferred declarative sentences (in 66.6% of ENS's, 57.9% of advanced NNSS's, and 31.2% of novice NNSS's moves; example 5). Indirectly giving advice by sharing their own experience was used by intermediate NNSS 36.3% of the time (example 6). Another strategy used by NNSS were interrogative sentences, found in 18.8% of novice NNSS's moves, 18.2% of intermediate NNSS's, and 10.5% of advanced NNSS's. Other strategies included the use of conditional sentences in 18.8% of novice NNSS's and 10.5% of advanced NNSS's advice, and the use of impersonal sentences in 5.6% of ENS's and 5.3% of advanced NNSS's moves.

(4) *Pídele tutoría, pregúntale algo*
'Ask him for an individual conference, ask him something'
[SNS: IMG_2259.8]

(5) I'm not exactly sure but I think that your best option will probably be Red Room[6]
[ENS: 130228-160609.19]

(6) I just made flashcards for myself and I went to talk to the professor
[ENS: 130227-130118a.10]

5 K represents the total number of moves made by each group; k represents the number of moves made using each strategy by group of informants; Grand K equals the total number of moves in the role-play.

6 Free tutoring service offered by Knox College to the students.

To mitigate the potentially face-threatening interpretation of advice, ENS, advanced NNSS and SNS – although less so – used internal modifiers (e.g., *just*, *perhaps*, *probably*, *a little bit*, *I think that*, *I guess*, *I am not sure but…*; example 7). In contrast, novice and intermediate learners did not use mitigators when giving advice, but instead used imperatives, boosters and other utterances with a strong directive force (examples 8 and 9).

(7) *Yo creo que tienes solo que practicar un poco más*
'I think that you just need to practice a bit more'
[advanced NNSS: IMG_1270.14-15]

(8) *Es importante que tú hagas tu tarea y leas los libros*
'It is important that you do your homework and read the books'
[novice NNSS: 130530-101016a.7]

(9) *Habla con tu profesor y estudia más en la biblioteca*
'Talk to your professor and study more in the library'
[intermediate NNSS: 130228-105230.4]

The lack of internal modification in lower-level NNSS data suggests that this is an area of increased difficulty for L2 learners. Indeed, when answering the second question of the written questionnaire (Barros García & Terkourafi, 2014, p. 10-13), some lower-level NNSS mentioned that they often feel unable to bring things up smoothly in Spanish. They explained that their developing communicative competence forces them to produce messages that go straight to the point, because they do not yet manage very well the polite strategies – i.e., the conventions – that can help present a message in the most appropriate way. These results are in line with Kasper and Rose (2002, p. 157), who found that nonnative speakers tend to rely on direct strategies in the early stages of development, with a gradual move to indirectness – going from conventional indirectness to internal and external modification of speech acts – as proficiency increases.[7]

Role-Play #2: Invitation to an Informal Dinner

In role-play #2, informants were asked to choose between inviting a friend over for dinner and being invited to dinner at a friend's place. In accordance with our findings from the written questionnaire (Barros García & Terkourafi, 2014), the starting hypothesis for this role-play was that, when interpersonal goals predominate over transactional ones and the relationship between interlocutors is close, as is the case with family and friends, participants will make less exten-

7 That this is the opposite result from that of Trosborg (1995) only serves to illustrate, in our view, the complexity of interpreting learner data.

Table 7: Percentage of occurrence of different linguistic strategies in invitations in RP #2

Group	Interrogative sentences	Conditional clauses	Declaratives	Total
ENS	66.7% (k = 4)	33.3% (k = 2)	–	23.1% (K = 6)
Novice NNSS	100% (k = 4)	–	–	15.4% (K = 4)
Intermediate NNSS	100% (k = 3)	–	–	11.5% (K = 3)
Advanced NNSS	50% (k = 3)	16.7% (k = 1)	33.3% (k = 2)	23.1% (K = 6)
SNS	57.1% (k = 4)	42.8% (k = 3)	–	26.9% (K = 7)
All groups	69.2% (k = 18)	23.1% (k = 6)	7.7% (k = 2)	100% (Grand K = 26)

sive use of those devices they explicitly associate with politeness, understood in its first-order incarnation as formality and good manners.

The analysis of role-play #2 reveals many different ways of doing face-work in informal settings, and shows that this kind of setting indeed favours an abundance of FEAs such as welcomes and compliments as mechanisms for establishing or consolidating an alliance with the addressee. It also attests to some similarities and differences in the use of FEAs among ENS, SNS, and NNSS in informal gatherings, which we discuss next.

Since the instructions of role-play #2 asked informants to issue invitations, most role-plays (78.8%) started with greetings followed by I1's invitation to dinner; however, variation was found in the forms used to realize the invitations, as summarized in table 7.

Table 7 shows that I1s preferred to issue their invitations using interrogatives (example 10). This strategy was found in all of the invitations made by novice and intermediate NNSS, 66.7% of those made by ENS, 57.1% by SNS, and 50% by advanced NNSS. Second, I1s – with the exception of lower-level NNSS – provided a description of the event followed by the invitation phrased as a conditional (42.8% of SNS's invitations, 33.3% of ENS's, and 16.7% of advanced NNSS's; example 11). Finally, 33.3% of the invitations made by advanced NNSS are declarative statements (example 12).

(10) Do you want to come to my place to get some dinner?
[ENS: 130227-175319.1]

(11) *¡Ey Charly! Voy a tener una reunión de amigos en mi casa, por si puedes venir*
'Hey Charly! I am going to have a friends get together in my house, in case you can come'
[advanced NNSS: IMG_1271.1]

(12) You can come to my house on Saturday for supper maybe
[ENS: 130228-104926.3]

According to Brown & Levinson (1987, p. 66), invitations are FTAs to the addressee's negative face, because the inviter is imposing on his/her time, and placing him/her in a situation whereby s/he is incurring a debt and might need to return the favor. As with advice, this face-threatening interpretation of invitations might prevail in cultures where the individual's freedom from imposition is of paramount importance, as in U.S. American culture. Nevertheless, in a culture bent toward solidarity and establishing rapport, inviting a friend over for dinner could be considered a FEA, because the addressee receives the inviter's favor and is recognized as a group member, such that his/her affiliation face is enhanced. In fact, results from the written questionnaire (Barros García & Terkourafi, 2014, p. 21–23) showed that, when asked about the importance of different behaviors by a friend, 83.4% of SNS, as opposed to only 34.6% of Americans – both ENS and NNSS – , assessed as very important that their friends propose to make plans together.[8] This difference supports the potential duality in interpretations of invitations by members of these two cultures outlined above. The analysis of the role-plays helped us elucidate this claim.

The comparison of I1s' performance indicates that SNS are more persistent when trying to persuade I2s to accept the invitation (example 13). In general, NNSS and ENS are more inclined towards leaving I2s room to decide whether or not to accept the invitation, and took pressure off by allowing them some time to make a decision (example 14). Not insisting that I2s accept the invitation may indicate, on the one hand, the higher appreciation that U.S. American culture has for the protection of the individual's autonomy face and, on the other hand, the influence of this higher appreciation on NNSS's performance in Spanish.

(13) *C: Oye Bu, esta noche vamos a quedar para ver el fútbol; ¿te vienes?*
A: Pues no sé, ¿a qué hora más o menos quedaréis? No sé si me vendrá bien
C: Tía vente
'C: Hey Bu, we are meeting tonight to watch the game; are you coming?
A: Well I don't know, at what time will you meet more or less? I don't know if I will be able to make it

8 In the questionnaire, informants were asked to rate the importance they attach to a friend: a) not meddling in their personal life, b) waiting until they have finished their turn to start talking, c) using mitigation and indirectness to make requests or to make a statement, d) making positive comments about them (their virtues, their belongings, their actions, etc.), and e) inviting them to make plans together (e.g., having a coffee, shopping, going out, etc.). They rated the importance of these behaviors on a 3-point scale, where 0 was labeled 'not important,' 1 'important,' and 2 'very important.' Inviting a friend to make plans together (behavior e) was rated as most important by SNS and least important by ENS (SNS mean 1.83, *SD* = .389; NNSS mean 1.18, *SD* = .756; ENS mean 1.10, *SD* = .774).

C: Come on dude'
[SNS: IMG_2263.1-3]

(14) Alright let me know if you can make it
[ENS: 130228-104819.9]

I1s frequently prefaced or followed their invitations with supportive moves (see table 8 below), which sought to ensure and/or facilitate I2s' acceptance, such as asking about I2s' plans before issuing the invitation (example 15), and making comments and jokes to reduce the importance of the event and/or to downplay the amount of effort devoted to organizing it, such that the addressee would not feel indebted to the organizer or forced to attend (example 16).

(15) Are you busy this weekend?
[ENS: 130228-104926.1]

(16) *Vamos a hacer una fiestecilla en casa. Yo voy a preparar algo de comer, que tengo un par de recetas que quiero probar a ver si os envenenáis o no (RISAS). ¿Si te apetece venirte?*
'We are organizing a little party at home. I will prepare something to eat, because I have a couple of recipes that I want to try to see if you get poisoned or not (LAUGHTER). Do you feel like coming?'
[SNS: IMG_2269b.3]

In example 16, note the use of internal mitigators (*fiestecilla* 'party-DIMUNITIVE', *algo de comer* 'something to eat') to lessen the importance of the event. Additionally, the speaker jokes that she wants to try these two new recipes to poison her guests. A similar strategy consists of I1s stating that they feel like cooking, indicating that they are doing this voluntarily and not out of obligation (example 17). In this way, I1s make it look as if I2s would be doing them a favor by accepting, instead of them doing a favor to I2s by inviting them.

(17) *Acabo de comprar mucha comida y quiero hacer una cena pero no es tan divertido tener una cena sola entonces me pregunto si quieres venir*
'I just bought a lot of food and I want to make dinner but it isn't that fun to have dinner by yourself so I wonder if you want to come'
[advanced NNSS: 00056b.4]

The distribution of these supportive moves varies by group, as shown in table 8, where the percentages indicate the use of different moves by each group of informants and the presence of the corresponding movement within the data.

As seen in table 8, the strategy most frequently found in invitations issued by novice NNSS (100%) and by ENS (50%) was to ask about I2s' plans before issuing the invitation. This strategy was also found in 50% of the invitations made by intermediate NNSS and by some advanced NNSS (16.7%). However, it was absent in data by SNS, making its occurrence in NNSS data an instance of

Table 8: Percentage of supportive moves in invitations in RP #2

Group	Asking about the other's plans	Reducing the importance of the event/ effort	Giving arguments	I2s doing I1s a favor	Total
ENS	50% (k = 4)	12.5% (k = 1)	25% (k = 2)	12.5% (k = 1)	30.8% (K = 8)
Novice NNSS	100% (k = 2)	–	–	–	7.7% (K = 2)
Intermediate NNSS	50% (k = 1)	50% (k = 1)	–	–	7.7% (K = 2)
Advanced NNSS	16.7% (k = 1)	33.3% (k = 2)	16.7% (k = 1)	33.3% (k = 2)	23% (K = 6)
SNS	–	50% (k = 4)	37.5% (k = 3)	12.5% (k = 1)	30.8% (K = 8)
All Groups	30.8% (k = 8)	30.8% (k = 8)	23% (k = 6)	15.4% (k=4)	100% (Grand K = 26)

what we will call a *sin of commission*,[9] that is, an instance when learners inappropriately transfer their L1 norms to the L2 setting. This is probably because it is difficult for them to avoid already acquired behaviors that are part of their L1 (for instance, using more indirectness to realize advice and making fewer offers of help in role-play #1). On the other hand, we will use the term a *sin of omission* for instances of L2 learners failing to display a new behavior that does not exist or does not constitute the norm in their L1. Both types of phenomena are generally due to learners' developing L2 competence, and appear to decrease over time, as learners' competence in the L2 increases. In this case, the use of questions about I2s' plans suggests an increased concern with the recipient's freedom of action by ENS and NNSS alike, which is consonant with the contents of autonomy face in U.S. American culture. However, the use of this strategy decreases as the proficiency of NNSS increases, which indicates that NNSS become progressively aware of the cultural premises of the target culture and try to adjust to them.

Accommodation is also observed in the other most frequently used strategy by I1s to support their invitations (30.8%), that is, minimizing the importance of the event or downplaying the effort I1 invested in organizing it (see example 16 above). This second strategy is found mostly in invitations issued by SNS (50%) and intermediate NNSS (50%), followed by advanced NNSS (33.3%) and ENS (12.5%). Third, I1s gave reasons to entice I2s to accept the offer (23%), such as

9 We adopt the terms *sin of omission* and *sin of commission* from Leech (2014, p. 36) but use them to mean something different, since we are extending their meaning into interlanguage pragmatics.

meeting new people or trying a delicious meal. This strategy was most frequent in invitations by native speakers (37.5% of SNS's invitations and 25% of ENS's), and by some advanced NNSS (16.7% of advanced NNSS's invitations). The least common strategy was adding comments about I2s benefitting I1s with their presence (15.4%; as in example 17 above). This strategy was found in 33.3% of the invitations made by advanced NNSS, and in 12.5% of ENS's and SNS's invitations.

Overall, table 8 indicates that NNSS – especially novices and intermediates – used fewer supportive moves in their invitations. Furthermore, lower-level NNSS used a smaller repertoire of strategies to persuade I2s to accept the invitation, in comparison with advanced NNSS and native informants. These two findings indicate the less developed linguistic competence of NNSS, as well as the gradual accommodation of learners to the patterns of the target culture as their proficiency in the language increases.

After the invitation was formulated and accepted – all I2s accepted the invitation – 50% of ENS I2s and 28.6% of advanced NNSS I2s offered to bring something along, such as a bottle of wine or part of the ingredients for cooking together, or asked if they should bring anything (see table 9 below). Similar offers were not found in data from SNS I2s, which could indicate that they are a convention of dinner arrangements in the U.S.A. only, or that Americans experience an invitation as incurring a debt more so than Spaniards do.

As can be seen in table 9, advanced NNSS adapted to the SNS norms somewhat by lowering the incidence of this kind of offer, while lower-level NNSS, on the other hand, produced no examples of this pattern. This could be due to their preference for going straight to the point and producing shorter role-plays, given their less well-developed linguistic competence.

For the second part of role-play #2, informants had to enact a separate scene, pretending they were at I1's house for the planned get-together. A polite way for the host to start the conversation when guests arrived at his/her place

Table 9: Percentage of I2s who offered to bring something over in RP #2

Group	Offering to bring something over
ENS (N = 6)	50% (n = 3)
Novice NNSS (N = 7)	–
Intermediate NNSS (N = 7)	–
Advanced NNSS (N = 7)	28.6% (n = 2)
SNS (N = 6)	–
All groups (Grand N = 33)	15.2% (n = 5)

Table 10: Percentage of I1s who started the second part of RP #2 welcoming I2s

Group	Welcome	
	Saying "welcome"	Showing house
ENS (N = 6)	16.7% (n = 1)	–
Novice NNSS (N = 7)	14.3% (n = 1)	–
Intermediate NNSS (N = 7)	28.6% (n = 2)	–
Advanced NNSS (N = 7)	14.3% (n = 1)	–
SNS (N = 6)	–	66.7% (n = 4)
All groups (Grand N = 33)	15.2% (n = 5)	12.1% (n = 4)

was to greet and welcome them (see table 10). Expressly saying *welcome* to a guest was only found in the role-plays of ENS and NNSS (28.6% of intermediates, 16.7% of ENS, and 14.3% of novice and advanced NNSS said welcome), while 66.7% of SNS welcomed I2s by showing them the house.

A potential explanation for the differences in welcoming guests is that, for Spaniards, showing the guest around helps them feel at ease, since it familiarizes them with the house, indicates that the host has no secrets, and puts everything at the guest's disposal. In contrast, for U.S. Americans this behavior might make guests feel uncomfortable, because they could feel as if they were invading the host's private space, or as if the host were showing off. All of this is characteristic of two cultures with different contents of face, which explains NNSS's transferring some features of their native understanding of face and their concomitant use of politeness into their performance in Spanish in role-play #2. Expressly saying welcome is an example of what we previously called a sin of commission, while not showing around the house constitutes a sin of omission.

According to Spanish cultural premises, the role of a guest is often fulfilled by praising the host's actions, possessions, and personality (Hernández Flores, 2003; Bernal, 2007; example 18).

(18) *N: ¿Quieres que te enseñe la casa?*
J: ¡Claro!
N: ¡Vamos a ver! Esta es la cocina, este es el baño
J: ¡Uy qué bonito!
'N: Do you want me to show you the apartment?
J: Of course!
N: Let's see! This is the kitchen, this is the bathroom
J: Wow how beautiful!'
[SNS: IMG_2260.8-11]

Table 11: Percentage of I2s who complimented I1s in role-play #2

Group	Complimenting
ENS (N = 6)	50% (n = 3)
Novice NNSS (N = 7)	28.6% (n = 2)
Intermediate NNSS (N = 7)	28.6% (n = 2)
Advanced NNSS (N = 7)	57.1% (n = 4)
SNS (N = 6)	66.7% (n = 4)
All groups (Grand N = 33)	45.5% (n = 15)

These compliments have the effect of reinforcing the interlocutors' relationship, and were used by I2s as follows: 66.7% of SNS, 57.1% of advanced NNSS, 50% of ENS, and 28.6% of intermediate and novice NNSS. The higher percentage of compliments in data from advanced NNSS in comparison to ENS shows a pattern increasingly approaching the target language as proficiency increases. In addition, the lower percentage of compliments in data from intermediate and novice NNSS, in comparison to all other groups, indicates a less developed proficiency. Table 11 summarizes these results.

After greetings, welcoming the guest, and/or exchanging compliments, hosts offered guests something to drink or eat. *Qua* commissive speech acts (Searle, 1975), offers involve an effort on the speaker's behalf (Ferrer & Sánchez Lanza, 2002, p. 109). Offers are usually formulated as interrogatives (80% of offers in the data), with SNS's offers being more direct than those issued by ENS and NNSS: 29.4% of offers issued by SNS are *wh*-questions (example 19), presupposing that the addressee will accept the offer, while 75% of ENS's offers and most NNSS's offers (90.9% of novice NNSS's offers, 68.8% of advanced NNSS's and 55.6% of intermediate NNSS's) are polar (yes-no) questions, (examples 20 and 21), leaving open the option of declining (see table 12 after the examples).

(19) *¿Qué quieres beber?*
'What do you want to drink?'
[SNS: IMG_2260]

(20) Is there anything I can offer you?
[ENS: 130227-133241b.11]

(21) ¿Quieres algo de beber o tomar?
'Would you like something to drink or to eat?
[advanced NNSS: IMG_1274.3]

The preference for polar questions by ENS and NNSS points to the English tendency toward *interactional pessimism* (Levinson, 1983, p. 274). Conversely, the

Table 12: Percentage of occurrence of different linguistic strategies in offers in RP #2

Group	Interrogative sentences		Indirect offer	Imperative mood	Total
	Wh-question	Yes/ No-question			
ENS	8.3% (k = 1)	75% (k = 9)	16.7% (k = 2)	–	18.5% (K = 12)
Novice NNSS	9.1% (k = 1)	90.9% (k = 10)	–	–	16.9% (K = 11)
Intermediate NNSS	33.3% (k = 3)	55.6% (k = 5)	11.1% (k = 1)	–	13.8% (K = 9)
Advanced NNSS	25% (k = 4)	68.8% (k = 11)	–	6.3% (k = 1)	24.6% (K = 16)
SNS	29.4% (k = 5)	17.6% (k = 3)	23.5% (k = 4)	29.4% (k = 5)	26.2% (K = 17)
All groups	21.5% (k = 14)	58.5% (k = 38)	10.8% (k = 7)	9.2% (k = 6)	100% (Grand K = 65)

higher number of *wh*-questions by SNS indicates a possible Spanish tendency for *interactional optimism*. In addition to interrogative sentences, 10.5% of the offers in the data were realized indirectly, with I1s explaining or showing to I2s all the different options of food and drink available, implicitly inviting them to help themselves to food and drink (example 22). The final linguistic resource used to formulate 9.2% of the offers in the data was the imperative mood (example 23), a strategy found only in offers by SNS (29.4%) and by advanced NNSS (6.3%). The lack of imperatives in the performance of ENS and lower-level NNSS is probably due to their association with commands in English, which also explains their avoidance during the beginning stages of acquiring the foreign language. Moreover, the frequent use of imperatives by SNS demonstrates their preference for a more direct conversational style, as mentioned above.

(22) *Y acá tengo salchichas y guacamole y muchas otras cosas.*
'And here I have sausages and guacamole and many other things.'
[intermediate NNSS: VID00006.7]

(23) *¡Pruébala!*
'Try it!'
[SNS: IMG_2269b.28]

A final notable feature that the analysis of role-play #2 illustrates is the more persistent behavior of SNS and advanced NNSS when making offers (table 13).

As table 13 shows, 66.7% of SNS and 28.6% of advanced NNSS "forced" their guests to eat even when they had not accepted an offer or had not yet

Table 13: Percentage of I1s who insisted vs. not insisted in their offers in RP #2

Group	Offering	
	Not insisting	Insisting
ENS (N = 6)	100% (n = 6)	–
Novice NNSS (N = 7)	100% (n = 7)	–
Intermediate NNSS (N = 7)	100% (n = 7)	–
Advanced NNSS (N = 7)	71.4% (n = 5)	28.6% (n = 2)
SNS (N = 6)	33.3% (n = 2)	66.7% (n = 4)
All groups (Grand N = 33)	81.8% (n = 27)	18.2% (n = 6)

replied to it, which is a pattern not found in ENS or lower-level NNSS data. This indicates that higher-level NNSS are increasingly aware of and adapt to the norms of the target culture. This kind of behavior on behalf of SNS and advanced NNSS should however not be interpreted as face-threatening, but rather as face-enhancing: the host assumes a degree of intimacy between the interlocutors and wants the guest to be perfectly served, so this behavior reinforces their affiliation face.

Role-Play #3: Negotiation with a Professor

For role-play #3 informants had to select between the role of I1, a student who needs to change the date of his/her final exam, and that of I2, a professor who is asked by one of his/her students if s/he could change the date of the final exam. This role-play was designed to help us investigate whether informants make more use of ritual politeness – i.e., deference and good manners – in formal settings, as in student-professor interaction. The reason why we wanted to investigate the link between ritual politeness and formality is that in the written questionnaire informants reported that politeness is only needed when there is no intimacy with the interlocutor, as with professors (Barros García & Terkourafi, 2014, p. 14), which reveals their first-order understanding of politeness as formality and proper language. By tapping into a scenario characterized by formality and distance par excellence, the analysis of role-play #3 should allow us to test the informants' metapragmatic claims, and to identify the linguistic devices that informants overtly link to the notion of politeness.

This scenario prompted a formal style of interaction and negotiation between I1s and I2s, encompassing a variety of features summarized in tables 14 and 15.

Table 14: Percentage of I1s who used different types of moves in RP #3

Group	Addressing I2 using academic titles	Addressing I2 using T/V		Explicitly requesting a change		Apologizing	Thanking
		Tú	Usted	Including an explanation	Directly		
ENS (N = 6)	66.7% (n = 4)	N/A	N/A	100% (n = 6)	–	50% (n = 3)	100% (n = 6)
Novice NNSS (N = 8)	62.5% (n = 5)	100% (n = 8)	–	25% (n = 2)	50% (n = 4)	–	75% (n = 6)
Intermediate NNSS (N = 6)	50% (n = 3)	100% (n = 6)	–	66.7% (n = 4)	16.7% (n = 1)	16.7% (n = 1)	66.7% (n = 4)
Advanced NNSS (N = 7)	57.1% (n = 4)	57.1% (n = 4)	42.9% (n = 3)	42.9% (n = 3)	28.6% (n = 2)	14.3% (n = 1)	71.4% (n = 5)
SNS (N = 6)	33.3% (n = 2)	–	100% (n = 6)	66.7% (n = 4)	16.7% (n = 1)	–	100% (n = 6)
All groups (Grand N = 33)	54.5% (n = 18)	54.5% (n = 18)	27.3% (n = 9)	57.6% (n = 19)	24.2% (n = 8)	15.2% (n = 5)	81.8% (n = 27)

When addressing I2s, 66.7% of ENS, 62.5% of novice NNSS, 57.1% of advanced NNSSs, 50% of intermediate NNSS, and 33.3% of SNS used the academic title *professor* (see table 14 above). This clear gradation in use by ENS, who used it the most, through NNSS to SNS, who used it the least, is in line with informants' answers to the written questionnaire. Indeed, 36.5% of Americans described a polite speaker as someone who uses honorifics, titles, and forms of address such as "sir" and "ma'am;" on the contrary, none of the SNS mentioned the use of titles in their definitions of a polite speaker. Rather, the main example provided by SNS to illustrate their definition of a polite speaker was the

Table 15: Percentage of I2s who used different types of moves in RP #3

Group	Putting impediments	Agreeing to change the date
ENS (N = 6)	16.7% (n = 1)	83.3% (n = 5)
Novice NNSS (N = 8)	25% (n = 2)	87.5% (n = 7)
Intermediate NNSS (N = 6)	16.7% (n = 1)	100% (n = 6)
Advanced NNSS (N = 7)	42.8% (n = 3)	85.7% (n = 6)
SNS (N = 6)	83.3% (n = 5)	16.7% (n = 1)
All groups (Grand N = 33)	36.4% (n = 12)	75.8% (n = 25)

appropriate use of the T/V system (Barros García & Terkourafi, 2014, p. 9). In the role-plays, all SNS addressed I2s using the formal pronoun *usted* but only advanced NNSS (42.9%) did so, which represents a sin of omission on behalf of novice and intermediate NNSS. Although formal and informal pronouns are introduced at beginner level, in the data lower-level NNSS only made use of the informal pronoun *tú*. This is suggestive of the increased difficulty that acquiring the T/V system represents for Spanish learners, also pointed out in their answers to the written questionnaire (Barros García & Terkourafi, 2014, p. 13). Here, then, we see two learning curves: one indicating that as NNSS's proficiency increases, L1 norms – the use of titles – subside, and a second curve showing that, again, as NNSS's proficiency increases, the use of L2 norms – use of the T/V address system – increases.

To reduce the impact of their requests for a change of date for the final exam, all I1s provided an explanation at some point in the conversation, but only ENS in their totality (100%) explained the reasons for their request without being asked (cf. table 14). On the other hand, about a quarter of I1s launched into the request directly, right after greeting the professor. Numbers indicate that nonnative speakers adapted to the norms of the target language by lowering the number of explanations given before being asked for them – i.e., reducing their adherence to L1 norms and thus their sins of commission – , although in this case, the considerably lower percentage of explanations by NNSS, especially novices, likely also stems from their limited resources in the L2. In addition, 28.5% of advanced NNSS, 25% of novice NNSS, 16.6% of intermediate NNSS, and 16.6% of SNS did not issue an explicit request for a change in the date of the final, but were given this option by I2s after they heard about I1s' situation. In sum, data from NNSS showed two opposing trends: making a request directly without providing an explanation and not making an explicit request but being given this option after explaining their personal situation. These two trends were not found in data from ENS but were found in data from SNS, which indicates some degree of accommodation on the part of language learners. Novice NNSS were the most divided in this respect, issuing both the highest number of requests asked directly and the highest number of implicit requests, which is probably a reflection of their less developed linguistic abilities. This is, then, an interesting finding, illustrating how the same underlying cause – limited language proficiency – can result in two diametrically opposed surface realizations: extreme directness and extreme indirectness (see also footnote 10 above).

With regard to the linguistic realization of requests, the conditional format is used in 100% of SNS's moves (example 24), in 57.1% of ENS's, and in 40% of advanced NNSS's. However, this strategy was not very frequent in data from

lower-level NNSS, presumably because they are not very familiar with it. In fact, the percentage of requests in the conditional format increased with proficiency. Second, SNS and advanced NNSS did not use interrogatives to make requests, while 57.1% of the requests made by novices, 40% by intermediates, and 28.6% by ENS are direct or indirect interrogative sentences that asked about the possibility of changing the date of the exam (example 25). Finally, 60% of advanced NNSS's requests, 40% of intermediates', 28.6% of novices', and 14.3% of ENS's are declarative sentences (example 26). Table 16 summarizes these results.

(24) *Queríamos preguntarle si podría cambiarnos la fecha del examen*
'We wanted to ask you if you could change the date of the exam for us'
[SNS: IMG_2261.4]

(25) I was wondering whether we can move back my final a little bit
[ENS: 130227-135848c.2]

(26) *Pensaba que a lo mejor podríamos cambiar la fecha unos días antes o después, como quieras*
'I thought that maybe we could change the date some days earlier or later, as you wish'
[advanced NNSS: 130227-135848c.2]

Coming to the choice of speech acts, apologies for the inconvenience caused to I2 were only found in data from U.S. Americans (table 14; example 27). No examples of apologies were found in SNS data, indicating a sin of commission by NNSS. This result further corroborates our earlier finding that autonomy face and avoidance of imposition are more important for English speakers.

(27) I'm sorry if that makes anything complicated
[ENS: 130227-175414.17]

In their responses to the request, 83.3% of SNS and 42.8% of advanced NNSS made it complicated for I1s to change the date of the exam (cf. table 15), claim-

Table 16: Percentage of occurrence of different linguistic strategies in requests in RP #3

Group	Conditional format	Interrogative sentences	Declarative statements	Moves
ENS	57.1% (k = 4)	28.6% (k = 2)	14.3% (k = 1)	24.2% (K = 7)
Novice NNSS	14.3% (k = 1)	57.1% (k = 4)	28.6% (k = 2)	24.2% (K = 7)
Intermediate NNSS	20% (k = 1)	40% (k = 2)	40% (k = 2)	17.2% (K = 5)
Advanced NNSS	40% (k = 2)	–	60% (k = 3)	17.2% (K = 5)
SNS	100% (k = 5)	–	–	17.2% (K = 5)
All groups	44.8% (k = 13)	27.6% (k = 8)	27.6% (k = 8)	100% (Grand K = 29)

ing that they were not responsible for this and that they had to ask the Dean or other people in the department to see if this change was possible. Here we have another example of advanced NNSS performing closer to native speakers of Spanish than to native speakers of English. Overall, 83.3% of ENS agreed to change the date of the exam, as did 100% of intermediates, 87.5% of novices, and 85.7% of advanced NNSS, as opposed to only 16.7% of SNS, although advanced NNSS, like SNS, put more impediments before finally accepting the request. This potentially suggests a difference between a more egalitarian culture (U.S. American) and a more hierarchically organized one (Peninsular Spanish), where authority is relatively unquestioned and those in a position of authority are less bound to respond positively to requests by inferiors.

Lastly, in role-plays from lower-level NNSS fewer questions were asked about why I1s were requesting a change. Probably due to a lack of proficiency, intermediates and novices simply accepted any possible reason provided by I1s and agreed faster to change the date of the exam. In other words, this difference among SNS, advanced NNSS and lower-level NNSS is probably due to acceptances being structurally easier for learners than saying no to I1's petition and explaining the reasons for their denial.

Role-Plays Discussion

A comparison of our results from the three role-plays shows that, in general, SNS used more strategies connected to face-enhancing than to face-saving, whereas the opposite is true of ENS. SNS adopted a more direct conversational style in all role-plays, in comparison to ENS. In role-play #1 – asking a classmate for help with a course – , more SNS offered help and advice before being asked compared with ENS, which points towards a potential FTA interpretation of unsolicited offers of help and advice by ENS, in contrast to a potential FEA interpretation by SNS. Similar considerations seem to underlie ENS's preference for giving advice rather than offering help in the same scenario. However, what our results suggest is that, in a culture oriented towards the enhancement of affiliation face, offers of help are predominately understood as demonstrations of solidarity among the interlocutors, as the SNS I2s' responses seem to indicate.

In the same way, in role-play #2 – inviting a friend over for dinner – SNS in the role of the host were more direct and persistent when trying to persuade their guests to accept the invitation or an offer (e.g., *wh*-questions, imperatives, content of the moves used to support invitations). This suggests that to SNS insistence is not understood as face-threatening but rather as highlighting the sincerity of the offer, making it easier for I2s to accept. ENS apparently under-

stand invitations and offers differently, and so used devices that are less direct (e.g., polar questions, indirect offers). All of this indicates that, to ENS, invitations and offers amount to the speaker imposing his/her will on the addressee and thereby curtailing his/her freedom of action – they threaten autonomy face –, whereas for SNS they are interpreted as showing interest in the addressee or being beneficial to him/her – they enhance affiliation face. This explains why Spanish allows for the use of more direct strategies in invitations and offers.

The only scenario where the performance of SNS and ENS did not differ substantially is role-play #3 – asking a professor to change the date of the final exam. In this case, all informants tended to be more formulaic, more indirect, and made greater use of mitigators to soften the strength of their utterances. All these strategies are frequently used in situations where there are significant differences in power, distance and/or ranking of the imposition, as in this role-play. In fact, in the written questionnaire (Barros García & Terkourafi, 2014, p. 14) the need for politeness emerged as particularly important for almost all informants when talking to professors. Their performance in role-play #3 confirms this and further shows what they prototypically understand as politeness: using titles or the T/V address system, apologizing, and thanking.

Coming to the performance of NNSS, this displayed their awareness of some Spanish patterns in all role-plays. Advanced NNSS, in particular, behaved more target-like than intermediate and novice NNSS, and emulated L2 norms in a number of situations, including the use of the imperative mood, the variety of supportive moves uttered before/after invitations, the higher number of compliments and offers of help, the use of the formal pronoun *usted* to address professors, the persistence when making offers, and the impediments presented to requests for a change of date of the final exam.

In line with L1 English norms, on the other hand, novices and intermediates were overall more concerned with face-saving than with face-enhancing. Compared with SNS and advanced NNSS, they committed more sins of commission, displaying more interactional pessimism (e.g., instead of using *wh*-questions to make an offer, they preferred the polar yes-no format, leaving open the option of declining). In addition, intermediate and novice NNSS were more concerned with not imposing on the other's time and freedom of action (e.g., before inviting someone over for dinner, NNSS and ENS asked about their plans whereas SNS did not). Furthermore, they showed more sins of omission, being less persistent in their performance (e.g., they did not offer things twice or insist on I2s accepting an invitation/offer). In conclusion, lower-level NNSS's overall performance was closer to ENS's than to SNS's.

Moreover, some features were only found in data from NNSS and ENS, but not from SNS (i.e., sins of commission). For instance, both NNSS and ENS re-

ceived their guests saying *welcome*, whereas SNS preferred to show them around. When invited to dinner, NNSS and ENS asked what to bring, a pattern not found in SNS data, suggesting that NNSS and ENS feel indebted to their hosts. Lastly, both ENS and NNSS apologized to professors for the inconvenience they might have caused in asking for a change of date for the exam, while SNS did not.

Besides pragmatic transfer, lack of linguistic proficiency is at least partly responsible for some of the patterns found in data from NNSS. For instance, lower-level NNSS did not make much use of elaborate mechanisms to persuade listeners to accept the invitation in role-play #2 (e.g., making jokes, minimizing the importance of the event, downplaying the effort involved in organizing it). In addition, most NNSS agreed to change the date of the exam in role-play #3, and lower-level NNSS did not ask many questions of the participant role-playing the student requesting this change. This last result is in line with research on pragmatic acquisition in L2, which suggests that beginning language learners produce more simple utterances than advanced learners, and rely on a few unanalyzed routines and conventionalized strategies (Pearson, 2006, p. 474). Another pattern found in our data, which is also well-documented in the literature (Kasper & Rose, 2002), is that the lower the level, the more direct learners' speech. For instance, in role-play #1, ENS, SNS, and higher-level NNSS all used mitigators to soften the strength of their advice; however, lower-level NNSS speakers did not try to lessen the impact of their advice. In fact, these two groups of language learners barely used any kind of mitigating strategy in any role-play, whereas SNS did. Therefore, the lack of mitigators in advice given by lower-level NNSS does not seem to be due to their adherence to the Spanish preference for directness, since SNS were keen to mitigate their utterances; rather, it seems to follow from learners' limited competence in the L2.

5 Conclusions

Research has characterized U.S. American culture as a culture more oriented towards the protection of autonomy face, and Peninsular Spanish culture as a culture more oriented towards the enhancement of affiliation face. This claim is supported in two ways in our data. First, it appears to guide participants' interpretations of certain speech acts (e.g., advice, offers) as face-threatening or face-enhancing, respectively, which, in turn, motivates use of these speech acts to different extents and their realization via different means (mitigation vs. directness). Both formal and discourse aspects in our data thus provide empirical evidence for the outstanding importance that non-imposition, non-intrusion,

and privacy has for U.S. Americans ––both in L1 English and in L2 Spanish––, and, consequently, the relevance to them of the avoidance and mitigation of FTAs. These features were significantly downplayed in data from SNS, who conversely appreciate the production of FEAs, in line with the claim that the Spanish emic construal of face prioritizes self-affirmation and being treated with familiarity (Bravo, 1999, 2008; Hernández Flores, 1999, 2003; Bernal, 2007).

Our findings show that NNSS pay more attention to avoiding imposition than SNS do. Both trends – increased attention to face-saving, less to face-enhancing – can be captured under the terms *sins of commission* and *sins of omission*, which we use to refer to learners' difficulty in avoiding L1 norms and in acquiring L2 norms respectively. As we saw in the analysis of the role-plays, both sins, but especially sins of commission, were observed more frequently in lower-level NNSS speech, which suggests that acquiring new L2 behaviors is easier for language learners than avoiding old L1 ones. In both cases, the result is decreased native-like performance – hence the term 'sin' – , which highlights the need for explicitly differentiating between L1 and L2 norms in the L2 classroom, and for further elaborating on the preferred patterns of the target culture.

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