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TEACHING SOCIOPRAGMATICS

Face-work, politeness and impoliteness in L2 Spanish colloquial conversations

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1. Introduction

This work presents selected theoretical and methodological lines of research developed within EDICE Program (*Studies on the Discourse of Politeness in Spanish*) for the teaching of Spanish sociopragmatics from a sociocultural perspective. It focuses on the concepts of *face management*, *politeness*, and *impoliteness* in natural colloquial conversations to reveal their implications for the classroom of L2 Spanish. Both the use of authentic materials and the use of certain methodological instruments (such as *tests of social habits*, see sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2) will prove to be a productive teaching approach. Such an approach falls within the field known as “interlanguage pragmatics” (Alcón Soler and Martínez-Flor 2008, p. 3), adopting a sociopragmatically oriented line of research and teaching to examine how pragmatic action is subject to social and cultural conditions (Blum-Kulka [1997] 2002, pp. 89–90) and how to transpose such action in a classroom context.

Within the field of the teaching and learning of L2 Spanish, there are several studies centering on the teaching of pragmatic contents and competences from a pragmalinguistic perspective. For example, Félix-Brasdefer (2004) discusses the use of mitigating refusals, while Félix-Brasdefer and Cohen (2012, p. 651) use the term *grammar* “to refer to a focus on grammatical forms in their role as pragmalinguistic resources (such as conditionals, imperfect tenses, adjectives, and adverbials) that are used to express pragmatic intent, such as respect or politeness, in socially appropriate situations.”

Since the goal of this chapter is to present a sociopragmatic perspective that takes into account valid sociocultural aspects for the situation in which communicative exchanges take place, Bravo’s approach to “sociocultural pragmatics” is key to the understanding of language as an object of study embedded in its social

context (Bravo 2005, p. 24). This definition pays attention to the language users' own sociocultural contexts, which includes interpersonal information, the communicative interaction, the speech community, and other possible social, economic, and cultural factors. Sociocultural contents are not, therefore, universal, but they are "filled" accordingly. Following this approach, many studies have used a "consultation" methodology through inter-subjective tests to assess their own interpretations centered on the language user under study and for different Spanish-speaking communities (cf. Bernal 2007; Hernández Flores 2002, 2006; Murillo Medrano 2005, among others).

This chapter is divided in three main sections. First, the chapter will discuss the concept of *face* with a focus on two of its variants, *autonomy* and *affiliation* proposed by Bravo in different works (Section 2), followed by an approach to the phenomena of politeness and impoliteness, based on the analysis of natural Spanish data extracted from corpora of colloquial conversations (Section 3). Then the chapter wraps up with some pedagogical implications and suggestions for the teaching of L2 Spanish sociopragmatics (Section 4). The teaching strategies proposed highlight the importance of the analysis of authentic conversations in combination with questionnaires or tests of social habits to study the sociopragmatic contents in a given sociocultural context; finally, the chapter closes with a section of conclusions and recommendations (Section 5).

2. Face: Autonomy and affiliation

The concept of *face* as defined by Goffman (1967) has been widely used for decades in studies of communicative interaction: "The term face may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes [. . .]" (Goffman 1967, p. 5).

Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987) further elaborated this concept by including two components: a positive face or "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others" and a negative one or "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others" (Brown and Levinson 1987, p. 62). Thus, social interaction is based on the balance of meeting the needs of a positive face and those of a negative one for all the interlocutors involved in a communicative exchange. The strategies of positive or negative politeness arise with the need of safeguarding those faces from the *inherent* threats of certain acts; for example, directive acts that constrain the listener's freedom of action, as they relate to their negative face. However, many researchers (Bravo 1999, 2003; Hernández Flores 2002; Matsumoto 1988) have criticized this dichotomy based on either theoretical or empirical evidence; for example, by considering that threats to the negative face can be subsumed in the positive one (Meier 1995, p. 385). These authors call for a greater cultural relativism to avoid falling into ethnocentrism.

Bravo's work is of particular interest. This author considers that the positive-negative division of face is not valid for all cultures; instead, she presents an elaboration of

face that correlates with the concepts of *autonomy* and *affiliation*, two comprehensive categories of *supposedly* human principles and, from there, *supposedly* universal. Bravo has defined these concepts in different studies (Bravo 1999, 2003, 2012): *autonomy* refers to the perceptions that an individual has of him or herself and the perceptions that others have of him or her as someone with a contour of its own within a group, while *affiliation* consists on behaviors that signal 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 (Bravo 2003, p. 106).

In a conversation, *autonomy* is manifested through everything an interlocutor does to display a differentiating feature from the group, and *affiliation* everything that promotes identification with it. In the Spanish society, for example, some autonomy contents configuring its basic face would involve the expression of *autoafirmación* (self-assertion) and *autoestima* (self-esteem): “being original and aware of the good qualities owned [by the speaker]” (Bravo 1999, p. 168, my translation); while some affiliation contents would have its ideal in showing *afecto* (affection) and *confianza* (trust). The ideals of trust and the want of strengthening friendship and vicinity bonds have also been identified by Hernández Flores (2002), Contreras Fernández (2004) and Bernal (2007) in colloquial Spanish conversations between participants from different regions of Spain. Trust is understood as *familiarity* and *intimacy*: speaking trustfully supposes for Spanish individuals speaking unreservedly and without the fear of offending the interlocutor. Some other examples include the following (cf. Bernal 2007, p. 51): having both valued qualities and valid opinions, performing tasks positively recognized and performing properly the tasks dictated by the role performed (autonomy face), and receiving and showing appreciation and consideration, being supportive and engaging with others (affiliation face).

3. Politeness and impoliteness

3.1. Politeness categories

The definitions of politeness have proliferated since the publication of Brown and Levinson’s work (1987). The sociopragmatic classification presented in this chapter comes from Bernal (2007), and it is based on empirical analysis of authentic materials (colloquial conversations in the area of Valencia, Spain) gathered by Briz and Grupo Val.Es.Co. (2002) (cf. Section 4). From this analysis, the author develops categories for studying (im)politeness that sometimes are not entirely independent of each other and may overlap.

3.1.1. Strategic politeness

This type of politeness refers to acts intended to avoid face-threatening risks. The aim is to alleviate the tension that those threats may cause during interaction. The threats are likely to damage the interlocutor’s face, its social or professional roles,

and its competence as a speaker, among others. These acts can attenuate the differences of opinion, the issues known to cause conflict, and utterances that are too imposing and may be considered threatening. An example of strategic politeness follows:

(1) [L.14.A.2] (120–126)

Luisa estaba hablando de unos muebles que había visto en un escaparate cuando la interrumpe su amiga Elena.

1. Luisa: = y queda superguay ese dibujo [mola cantidad

2. Elena: [mira que (())] // **perdona**
perdona↓

perdona que te corte↓ sigue hablando§

3. Luisa: § no§

4. Elena: § noo/ digo que a ver dónde lo
esperamos/ que está en Alacuás// en Mislata¹/ que ya viene para acá

In this exchange, the interruption is mitigated though the polite excuses Elena proffers in her first intervention (number 2 in the above example).

3.1.2. *Valorizing politeness*

This type of politeness, identified in different studies about Spanish-speaking communities (Albelda Marco 2008; Barros García 2011; Bernal 2007; Kaul de Marlangeon 2005), aims at enhancing the interlocutor's face, something that can be achieved through acts such as direct flattering (addressing, for example, a high intellectual level or a graceful physique), praising property (that is nice and desirable), or praising somebody from the family or circles of friends for their good qualities.

(2) [IH.340.A.1] (12–14) Ana muestra unas lámparas a su hermana Victoria.

1) Victoria: ¿cómo la has encendido↑?§

2) Ana: § tocando (3")

3) Victoria: ¡ay! pues sí/ sí que [ilumina=]

4) Ana: [es un mue(ble)]

5) Victoria: = ¡qué cosa más bonita! ¿eh?;qué original!§

The interaction above occurs between two sisters and inside Anna's apartment, newly married. Ana is showing the lamps to Victoria, who repeatedly makes compliments during the conversation to praise her sister's good taste.

3.1.3. *Group politeness*

The communicative activities identified as group politeness aim at promoting the relations between the members of a group. There are acts directed at, for example,

joint activities (see example (3)), defending the group against negative comments of others, and remembering shared experiences.

(3) [J.82.A.1] (559–567) Sergio invita a Jaime a jugar al frontón.

- 1) Sergio: ((ahora)) **VENTE ahora a- a jugar al frontÓN Jaime// los jueVEES/ por la mañana**
- 2) Jaime: cuando se me cure el constipao
- 3) Sergio: de once a UNA/ jugamos ahí/ ((pero)) unas palizas/ pero de muerte ¿eh?// y después la cervecita↑

Bernal (2007) postulated a type of *inauthentic impoliteness* for apparently impolite acts² (use of insults, denigrating nicknames, among others) that are aimed at the interlocutor but without an interpretation favoring impoliteness or impacting the situation with a negative effect. Such acts form part of a playful style that favors the affinity and the solidarity between participants. Its use is based on a relation of trust and a high degree of interpersonal closeness.

(4) [J.82.A.1] (479–489) Juan cuenta a sus amigos que ha empezado a construir una bodega en su casa de campo.

- 1) Juan: Me estoy haciendo una bodega en Cirat, macho me estoy haciendo una bodega
- 2) Vicente: **¡calla cabrito! que te vas y no me dices ni pío/ tú**
- 3) Sergio: pero si fue pensao y hecho/ mira era- era un sábado a las ocho de la noche/ y dig(o) ¡hostia!/ yo tengo que (())

When interpreting the above, from a broad perspective, the term *cabrito* ‘cocky bastard’ is not considered insulting because there is closeness and familiarity between friends. Indeed, if we restrict the analysis to the form of the utterance, the term is embedded in a directive act, an appeal to silence the interlocutor. However, if we include in the analysis sociopragmatic considerations on how Vicente treats Juan’s face, what is said in line 2 would constitute, firstly, a rebuke to Juan for going to town without Vicente (so that the affiliative face among them may be threatened), while at the same time, Juan’s autonomy face is also enhanced by presenting himself as a person with interesting plans and projects to share somehow. Consulting with other language users may provide support to the analyst’s interpretation and give new perspectives. In this sense, and as presented in Section 4.1.2, informants provided their views on this particular example in a questionnaire about impoliteness. Some of the answers obtained were: *it is the typical rebuke among friends, they do not seem to be angry; it is almost a manner of talking to each other; Juan is more impolite for his attitude than Vicente for the expression he uses*. Thus, *calla cabrito* ‘shut up cocky bastard’ is not interpreted as an insult with an effect of

impoliteness. Additionally, not fulfilling Juan's invitation is considered as socially worse than Vicente's rebuke.

3.1.4. *Ritual politeness*

This category results from empirical evidence in everyday meeting situations and home visits. In authentic materials of conversations among Spanish participants, the acts produced by the host are, for example, making offers of food and drink, insisting on the offers, preventing possible failures in making such offers, ensuring the guests' comfort, showing interest in their issues, health, or family members and significant others. Among the acts produced by the guest are, for example, praising the offers received, praising the host's belongings or other related aspects, showing interest for their issues and health, their family and significant others, not wanting to cause discomfort, and, finally, interceding on behalf of their children.

An example would be the following: in a home visit between relatives and friends, having a guest ask for one more piece of cake before it has been offered is most likely played in the Spanish context as a compliment to the host, as it is a positive confirmation of the offer or even of the host's ability as a chef (which would enhance its autonomy face in terms of their value as such).

Another example of ritual politeness can be found in the following exchange:

(5) [L.15.A.2] (1090–1092) Elena le ofrece una bebida a Luis.

1. Elena: ¿Quieres un Jotabé?
2. Luisa: **Un Jotabé nada menos↓ que tiene aquí ¿tienes Jotabé?**
3. Elena: Sí.

In this example, the affirmative response that the guest gives to her host is achieved through praising the quality of the offer.

3.1.5. *Discursive politeness*

This type of politeness also emerged as a result of the empirical analysis of authentic conversations among Spanish participants (Bernal 2007). It refers to aspects of discursive and thematic progress, as well as interlocutors' active participation in conversation. Discursive politeness utilizes the social function of showing interest for the interlocutors as competent speakers and of showing commitment with their discourses, ratifying them as valid narrators. It includes conventional discursive politeness (paying attention, backchannelling, or providing positive feedback) and thematic discursive politeness. In the latter, one can identify acts such as collaborating with the interlocutor by supplying a word that is lacking, confirming, or correcting a term that has been used, sharing similar experiences to those of the interlocutor's, bringing up issues of concern to the

interlocutor, and finally following maintaining or resuming the interlocutor's conversational topics. Here is an example:

- (6) [RB.37.B.1] (1–10) Belinda y Claudia (estudiantes) hablan con Aurelia, la señora de la limpieza.
- 1) Belinda: **¿QUE cuándo iréis al pueblo por fin?**
 - 2) Aurelia: ¿al pueblo? ((a ver mañana/ sábado/// pero ¿cómo quíeis decir↓ de vaca [ciones↑?])
 - 3) Claudia: [((¡ayy!))]
 - 4) Belinda: § **sí↓de vacaciones**
 - 5) Aurelia: en agosto
 - 6) Belinda: **QUE tu marido las tiene en agosto ↓, ¿no?**

3.2. Impoliteness

Impoliteness has been frequently defined as absence of politeness. The interdependence between politeness and impoliteness is found in the theoretical and methodological frameworks based on Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1987) seminal work. For example, Culpeper (2005) inverts the set of strategies for politeness and orients them toward the production of impoliteness in the following way (Culpeper 2005, pp. 41–44): (1) *bald on record impoliteness*: refers to the intention of provoking harm on the interlocutor's face; (2) *positive impoliteness*: used to attack a positive face; (3) *negative politeness*: used to attack a negative face; (4) *sarcasm or mock politeness*: use of an insincere politeness; (5) *withhold politeness*: lack of politeness where a polite behavior is expected; (6) *off-record impoliteness*: produced through indirect forms and implicatures.

According to Bernal (2007, p. 73), a critique of Culpeper's model (2005) is that, on the one hand, strategies identified may correspond to different levels at the same time: what the author proposes as a positive impoliteness (2) and a negative one (3) may be produced directly in (1), concealed in (4), or through implicatures in (6). On the other hand, the clear intention of damaging the interlocutor's face might be present in more than one strategy.

When analyzing impoliteness, it is very important to observe the effects of the interlocutors' behavior during the interaction; that is to say, the social effect—positive or negative—that the acts have on the interpersonal relationship (Bravo 2003, p. 146), so as to interpret whether impoliteness has been produced. The effect of impoliteness is crucial, for example, to interpret the impact of an insult, an act commonly codified as impolite, but interpreted otherwise depending on situational and contextual factors such as, for example, the use of the expression *cabrón* (bastard) among friends and with a sense of camaraderie (cf. Section 3.1). The analysis of everyday conversations between Spanish interlocutors enables the identification of different types of impoliteness, which are valid just for the

communicative situations analyzed and the sociocultural community under study (cf. Bernal 2007, 2008).

3.2.1. “Normative” impoliteness

This type of impoliteness meets the expectations of a quarrel between related interlocutors in which the threatening acts (such as blaming and criticizing, among others) do not directly involve a negative interpersonal effect, but on the contrary, help to vent emotions and positively contribute to a settlement.

(7) [VC.117.A.1](40–56) Pilar (madre), Carlos (padre) y Mónica (hija) hablan de poner la televisión y grabar un programa.

1) Pilar: ¡AY AY AY! oye Mónica/ ponme el vídeo

2) Carlos: YA ESTÁ PUESTO

3) Pilar: ¡mira que es!/ ¿eh?

4) Carlos: YA (E)HTÁ PUESTOO

5) Mónica: (A Pilar) °ponn el vídeo que no te lo ha puesto°

6) Pilar: **mira que tiene maal ¿eh? yogur/ tiene mal yogur grande§**

7) Carlos: § (alcahueta)

8) Pilar: ¡cállate ya!/// (2´´) no hace más que hablar/ (sandeces)

The daughter, Mónica, tells her mother that, contrary to her father's claims, the recorder is not turned on, hence the discomfort of the mother, Pilar, who, in line 6, makes a negative comment about Carlos with an euphemistic expression (changes the expression “having bad blood” *tener mala leche* to “having bad yogurt”); Carlos responds with “snitch,” an insult that is actually received by Pilar and answered in line 8. When presenting the above example with a brief description of the situation and the participants (cf. Section 4.1.2), the informants commented as follows below: *I find that it is impolite because of the close relationship between family members. Respect is lost when it comes to your own family. He is disrespectful to Pilar, and he even insults her constantly. Carlos is not polite to his wife and daughter, and the daughter with her father. They may be considered too impolite by raising their voices and using imperatives, but it is quite difficult to assert this because the conversation may have a humorous overtone that is not reflected in the transcript.* This shows how the analyst's interpretation and the consultation with the language user can come together to reinforce the interpretation in relation to prevailing sociocultural contents.

3.2.2. Impoliteness produced by threats that are not attenuated or repaired

This type of impoliteness is oriented as an attack toward the interlocutor's face, either toward his/her personal worth, social or professional roles, or group face regarding family, friends, or another group membership.

(8) [S.65.A.1] (445–450)

- 1) Ana: ¿yy usted qué le hace a su chiquita/ ee- que le hace rabiar?/ [la pobreta=]
- 2) Marisa: [(())]
- 3) Ana: =siempre está gri- [siempre está=]
- 4) Marisa: [(())]
- 5) Ana: = mamá déjame déjame§
- 6) Marisa: §sí déjame porque
(es que es demasiao↓ ¡hija mía! es que es demasiao) ayer a las diez me llamó por teléfono↑/ mamá prepárame el (())/ oye↓ pero bueno pero ese estrés ¿¡para qué!/? no↓ no↓

In the consultation conducted (cf. Section 4.1.2), informants' perception of the situation in example (8) is as follows: *Yes, it is offensive, it is very direct. Ana is impolite when invading Marisa's privacy (but that depends on the degree of trust). It is impolite to meddle and ask about a private situation between mother and daughter (but this depends on the relationship).* The informant's comments, regardless of whether they perceive impoliteness or not, agree on the importance of the relation and the trust between the participants involved in the situation.

3.2.3. *Impoliteness produced by breach of politeness norms*

This type of impoliteness refers to acts that break the expectations in the rituals of politeness for certain situations; for example, within encounter situations, not greeting the participants or, in the ritualized situation of a visit, not accepting offers or referring to certain taboo topics, among many others. This also includes self-denigrating acts that are consented by the interlocutor instead of expressing a disagreement.

In the following example, Marina, rather than positively value the fact that her friend Felisa has lost two kilos she had previously gained, makes a comment that goes in the opposite direction, pointing out the kilos that she has yet to lose: *Well, you still got twenty to go*, which can be very threatening for Felisa. In the consultation process, this has been considered impolite by informants, since it seems that Marina, instead of supporting her friend, is laughing at her.

(9) [PG.119. A.1] (302–318) Felisa, Marina y Paco son amigos; hablan del peso de Felisa.

- 1) Felisa: había engordao dos/ pesaba ochenta y dos (RISAS)
- 2) Marina: (RISAS)
- 3) Felisa: ya sabes que me- que me zurzan§
- 4) Paco: § va a estar ciento sesenta y tantos↑
- 5) Marina: ¡jo(d)er!/// ¿y ahora cuántos? ¿ya los has adelgazao?
- 6) Felisa: ahora he bajao dos// ahora estoy en ochenta
- 7) Marina: **bueno/ pues aún te sobran veinte**

4. Pedagogical implications

Based on the above considerations, the need to use authentic materials for the analysis of (im)politeness phenomena becomes apparent; these materials are also necessary for analyzing the performance of speech acts and the description of sociocultural contents. When presenting authentic colloquial conversations to learners of L2 Spanish, the pedagogical sequence should focus on how language users behave spontaneously. The teacher's role is that of a facilitator who uses natural communicative situations during the learning process, instead of using made-up examples. As for the purely cultural contents, Koike and Lacorte (2014, p. 27) point out that the objective is “for learners to discuss their own cultural expectations regarding cultural norms, and to compare them to those of the different Hispanic groups, so that they might see their own behaviors and values in light of those of Hispanic cultures.”

As Alcón Soler and Martínez-Flor (2008, p. 8) mention, “following a conversation analysis (CA) approach, research has provided information about how learner's interactional competencies are both resources and objects of learning.” Ishihara (2010) has also drawn attention to the usefulness of naturally occurring data in instructional pragmatics,³ as “the results from empirical work in CA can be directly applicable to the teaching of L2 pragmatics and discourse” (Ishihara 2010, p. 943), something that is in line with Félix-Brasdefer's (2006) research, who shows the potential of conversational analysis for teaching and learning the pragmatics of a language. Following this, learners of Spanish are able to work with natural Spanish language interactions extracted from corpora gathered by academics and published for the community or accessible through the Internet, as the ones described below.

The examples presented so far were extracted from the general corpus of spoken Spanish developed by the research group Val.Es.Co. (Briz and Grupo Val.Es.Co. 2002). This corpus contains data from the Spanish spoken in the metropolitan area of Valencia (Spain) and is widely used within corpus analysis, pragmalinguistics, and sociopragmatics for the Spanish language. The aim of this research group is to characterize colloquial register (including intonation, word order, and connectors) and study the structure of conversation and its units. The corpus has also provided a language basis for studying politeness phenomena (Albelda Marco 2008; Barros García 2011; Contreras Fernández 2004; Zimmermann 2003).

The following section presents methodological instruments that have been developed for the analysis of different sociopragmatic and cultural contents, and that may be applied in the teaching of L2 Spanish in order to expose students to authentic materials and promote their analytical perspectives on this content.

4.1. Tests of social habits

The study of politeness conducted by researchers in the EDICE Program has been enriched by the use of tests and questionnaires for different varieties of Spanish: e.g., Spain (cf. Hernández Flores 2002, 2006; Contreras Fernández 2004; Bernal 2007), Argentina (Boretti 2003), or Costa Rica (Murillo Medrano 2005). In these tests,

interlocutors themselves define and interpret certain communicative behaviors, presented in general or in particular through research materials. Knowing what the “everyman’s interpretation” is enriches the analyst’s interpretation. Boretti (2003) draws attention to the fact that the use of *tests of social habits* is fruitful as supporting material to comprehend the interlocutors’ sociocultural context and perceptions of what is socially valid in their community. Such metapragmatic information and knowledge on the sociocultural context is crucial in sociopragmatic research to interpret whether a behavior is polite or not in a given situation (Bravo 2003, pp. 103–104). Accordingly, a test of this kind helps the analyst get closer to the perceptions interlocutors have about what is polite or impolite.

Within the EDICE Program, the project COSOPRAG—Corpus of Sociopragmatic Information (www.edice.org)—included a *discourse completion test* for eliciting certain communicative acts in given situations, using the following two general questions: 1) What are the prototypical communicative acts for this situation? and 2) What are the social habits related to these acts? Other questions are used to gather both linguistic and sociocultural information on the prototypical communicative activities under study.

Teachers may replicate this type of questionnaire by providing students with language sequences in which they can assess the interlocutors’ behaviors. In this way, learners get an approximation on what language users consider valid and pertinent for a given situation (Bernal and Hernández Flores 2016). Contrastive studies have shown the efficient use of this methodology to deepen the understanding of cultural contents as in, for example, Contreras Fernández (2004) for German-Spanish.

Below we present three instruments used in different studies with the aim of researching communicative activities related to face, politeness, and impoliteness, in connection with the socio-cultural contexts relevant to each situation.

4.1.1. *Test of social habits for politeness*

Hernández Flores (2002) used this type of questionnaire to gather information on the interlocutors’ representations and evaluations of politeness behavior among family and friends in Spain. The test was a two-part questionnaire: in the first part, participants wrote down what they would say in nine different situations (including asking for something, giving advice, or inviting); in the second one, participants gave their own definitions or views on politeness phenomena. The information obtained had an indicative value, since the interlocutors’ definitions of polite behavior did not necessarily correlate with the ones produced during the interaction (Hernández Flores 2002, p. 45). From her analysis, Hernández Flores (2002) concludes that interlocutors are not concerned with their negative face, contrary to what would be expected in these types of situations according to Brown and Levinson’s theory (cf. Section 2). Also, the author remarks that politeness is considered *a manifestation of affection within the family*; for instance, participants referred to politeness as the *action to help*, a purely affiliative behavior. Contreras Fernández (2004) also used this type of test to conduct a contrastive study between Spanish and German. When

comparing definitions, in both studies politeness is predominantly considered as an *attitude*, with a focus on the forms used, the interlocutors' behaviors and the way of addressing one another, and *respect* and *education* are the values most commonly associated with politeness. Offering the seat, greeting, or helping someone are examples of activities that reflect polite behavior. However, cues referring to politeness as a social norm are not comparable in number (22 and 3 respectively). Also, it is interesting to note that informants refer in eleven occasions to the utilitarian and strategic features of politeness; for instance, politeness as a condition to achieve different purposes (Hernández Flores 2002).

4.1.2. *Test of social habits for impoliteness*

Regarding impoliteness, Bernal (2007) presented a questionnaire similar to the ones discussed above, but focused on eliciting representations of impolite behavior (the questionnaire is accessible at the following website: www.edice.org). The author used this tool as a supporting analytical instrument to provide evidence on behaviors and values prevailing in the sociocultural group under study, as well as to shed some light on the phenomenon of impoliteness being analyzed in other areas, such as in political discourse (Bolívar 2005) and talk shows (Culpeper 2005).

The collected responses came from informants from the metropolitan area of Valencia, since it was considered relevant to access informants' opinions and perceptions of impoliteness in the same area of the corpus. This methodological decision is to take into account the peculiarities that may exist in a particular cultural community, but also, to enable a valid contrastive analysis with other data, so as to establish similarities and differences with informants from other areas or communities.

Specifically, the questionnaire asked participants to:

- a) Give a definition of impoliteness.
- b) Narrate an impolite situation experienced or witnessed, and provide more examples where they would observe impoliteness in everyday life.
- c) Give their opinions about interruptions or overlaps during conversations (with the aim of capturing some aspects of cultural variability).
- d) Indicate how often they would use offensive expressions, such as *tacos* ('taboo words') and insults when talking to certain people (different family members or friends).
- e) Indicate whether they use such expressions in the same way with people other than their own gender.
- f) Indicate whether they would use certain expressions found in the materials analyzed when addressing certain people (including spouse, children, and friends).

The previous sections (Section 3, Section 4.1.2) already contain some extracts from the results obtained from the questionnaire. To briefly summarize the results from the questionnaire, impoliteness in informal, colloquial conversations is defined as:

- a) A breach of politeness rules (for example, to start eating without all the guests at the table).
- b) A lack of respect and education (for example, to put a person in a humiliating situation by not showing the deserved respect).
- c) A behavior aimed at hurting other person's feelings (that is, not having consideration and offending the other individual).

4.2. *An example of a questionnaire applied in the classroom: Complaints*

In general, pragmatic and sociopragmatic contents are not systematically or rigorously presented in textbooks for learning L2 Spanish, at least in the very first stages. It is often left to the discretion of the teacher and their own personal motivation and concern to introduce such language contents in the classroom (cf. Morales Ruiz 2015). In most cases, pedagogical materials do not accurately reflect the sociocultural reality of the Spanish language and its culture with regard to, for example, the speech act of thanking, as De Pablos-Ortega (2011, p. 2424) points out. In a Swedish context, De Matos Lundström (2013) reaches the same conclusion in reviewing secondary-school textbooks most commonly used for teaching L2 Spanish: “Usually the metapragmatic information is not combined with any activities, and the activities that aim to develop communicative skills are not combined with further metapragmatic information” (p. 2).

This section briefly presents an application of the above critique. In this case, Swedish students of L2 Spanish designed and answered a questionnaire on the speech act identified as *complaint* (see Appendix 2). Students had previously enrolled in a course on Pragmatics and Sociopragmatics at a Swedish university, as part of the third (out of four) semester of studies leading to a degree in Spanish. During the course, one of the central topics was the analysis of speech acts related to *face* management and (im)politeness. They analyzed examples from studies of different varieties of Spanish, trying not to focus on one in particular. The group of 15 students was quite heterogeneous: there were Swedish students (with Swedish as their native language), students from Spanish-speaking countries studying Spanish to complete their teacher-training program for secondary schools, and second-generation students who have Spanish as a heritage language. The last two subgroups were speakers of Peruvian, Spanish Peninsular, Venezuelan, Cuban, and Chilean varieties. Swedish students had experiences with stays in different Spanish-speaking countries. All this led to a rich discussion regarding sociocultural norms and values in different Spanish-speaking communities, as well as many *sociocultural hypotheses* (cf. Bravo 2003) that were made for the Swedish community in order to make comparisons and contrasts.

Students analyzed in great depth rejections, compliments, offers, and complaints, all of these in relation to the notions of face and the social effects of (im)politeness. Students reviewed, among others, the works of Bravo (2012), Félix-Brasdefer (2004), Placencia and Fuentes (2013) and, more specifically for *complaints* or *claims*, Bolívar

(2002) for Venezuelan Spanish. Having read and analyzed the specialized literature, students were then asked to think of situations that could elicit the use of complaints, handing them out in writing for one given class. The teacher would then proceed to discuss the situations into small groups, asking them to select twelve situations that would take place in very different contexts and with different degrees of formality (in a restaurant, in a shop, among friends, among others). These situations shaped the basic design for the questionnaire (see Appendix 2). During the same class, students proceeded to edit the questionnaire using a computer and projector.

The next activity was to administer the questionnaire to a few people who knew Spanish (coworkers who attended other classes, family and friends, among others). The answers obtained were brought to class and discussed in small groups. After the questionnaire, as a pilot study, students themselves realized that some situations should have been formulated differently because of their opaqueness or ambiguity; for example, in a situation where a girlfriend cheats with a best friend (*‘What would you tell your partner?’*), it would have been best to elicit answers from different parties and not just focusing on a single one (*‘What would you say to your partner and to your best friend?’*). Students also commented that they could have included the “Do not say anything” option because, due to a given situation included in the questionnaire (*‘You’re on the subway and a woman hits you in the face with her elbow’*), there may be a tendency not to say a word, as is the case found for the Swedish group, while for the Spanish-speaking group virtually all students would produce a complaint.

The classroom activities, both to develop the questionnaire and to review the answers gathered, led to a discussion of the theoretical and methodological topics covered during the course, with thoughts on some of the following questions:

- 1) How is face configured in the situations?
- 2) Is the speech act of complaining produced politely or impolitely?
- 3) If produced politely, what strategies are being used? What type of politeness best represents the strategy in question?
- 4) If produced impolitely, what elements are expressing this communicative behavior? Would it be impolite because it is threatening the interlocutor’s face, because it is breaching any norm, or both?

The answers obtained from the ensuing discussion related to the course contents, operating methodologically with a research instrument that was collaboratively created by native and non-native speakers of Spanish and that served the purpose of gathering natural information from participants. The results did not provide wide-reaching conclusions, but they were valid for the purpose intended. On the one hand, students could specify some differences and similarities between the Swedish sociocultural groups and Spanish-speaking ones, while on the other hand students could engage in a very productive exchange where the importance of taking into account sociocultural contexts was a key for understanding conversational interactions in different Spanish varieties.

5. Conclusion

This chapter introduced the lines of research carried out within the international network EDICE Program (Studies on the Discourse of Politeness in Spanish), in terms of communication strategies for managing face, as discussed by Bravo (1999, 2003, 2005, 2012) and Hernández Flores (2002, 2013), with special attention to activities related to politeness and impoliteness, as referred by Bernal (2007, 2008) for colloquial conversations in Spanish. In addition to authentic materials for the teaching and learning of L2 Spanish or Spanish as a foreign language, the use of tests of social habits is considered a crucial instrument for gathering valuable support material when researching language use. It is one instrument that may enable access to language users' sociocultural contexts, the way they relate to each other, and their perceptions about what communicative behaviors are socially valid.

In the classroom, when teaching sociopragmatic contents, the implications of following these theoretical and methodological frameworks are: a) using authentic materials is needed for showing how the phenomena under study are achieved naturally; b) the tests of social habits can be adapted for specific needs; for example, focusing on a specific speech act, identifying potential face-threatening acts, or analyzing what social effects produce (im)polite communicative behavior on the interaction. Both implications need a close reading of previous studies in the specialized literature, adopting instruments for approaching sociocultural contexts, as well as designing those instruments in the classroom itself.

An illustration of the above has been given with the class activity in a Swedish university-level course on Pragmatics and Sociopragmatics. Students analyzed complaints by referring to specialized literature, designing a questionnaire focused on that speech act, submitting the questionnaire to selected informants, and later on discussing the results obtained. The whole process was accompanied by a productive, ongoing discussion on the course contents, particularly on face management, (im)politeness phenomena, and the role of sociocultural context when interpreting language data and analyzing a specific communicative behavior. The heterogeneity of this group of students in terms of their origin from different Spanish-speaking countries, some students' background as speakers of Spanish as a heritage language, as well as the community membership of the native speakers of Swedish, contributed to a greater awareness of the importance of referring to sociocultural contents when analyzing a specific communicative behavior.

Notes

- 1 Villages situated in the vicinity of Valencia.
- 2 A phenomenon identified as "antipoliteness" (*anticortesía*) by Zimmermann (2003) for teen language.
- 3 Instructional pragmatics is a term that refers to the educational component of inter-language pragmatics, aiming to promote the acquisition of sociopragmatic competence (Ishihara 2010, p. 938).

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Appendix 1. Transcription conventions (adapted from Briz and Grupo Val.Es.Co, 2002)

1., 2., 3.	Each of the interventions of a speaker.
§	Immediate succession, without noticeable pause between two emissions of different speakers.
=	Maintenance of turn of a participant in an overlap.
[Place where an overlap or superposition begins.
]	End of simultaneous talk.
-	Restarts and self-interruptions without a pause.
/	Short pause, less than half a second.
//	Pause between half of a second and second.
///	Pause of a second or more.
(5 “)	Silence (lapse or interval) of five seconds; the number of seconds is indicated in the pauses of more than one second, where it is especially significant.
↑	Rising intonation.
↓	Falling intonation.
→	Maintained or suspended intonation.
HEAVY	Marked or emphatic pronunciation (two or more uppercase letters).
(())	Indecipherable fragment.
((Always))	Doubtful transcription.
(hea) vy	Reconstruction of a lexical unit that was pronounced incomplete, when understanding is needed.
h	Aspiration of implosive “s”.
(LAUGHTER, COUGHING)	Comments that appear outside the utterances.
aa	Lengthening of vowels.
nn	Lengthening of consonants.
¿i !?	Exclamatory questions.
¿?	Interrogations. Also for tags such as “right?, uh?, you know?”
!	Exclamations.
<i>Italics:</i>	Reproduction and imitation of utterances. Direct style, characteristic of the so-called conversational narration.
Bold:	Fragment the analyst wants to highlight in the analysis.

Appendix 2. Questionnaire on complaints made by students of L2 Spanish in the classroom.

DATOS DE LOS INFORMANTES. Marca con una X y rellena los espacios donde sea apropiado.

Sexo: (M) (F)

Edad: (15–25) (26–55) (más de 56)

Nivel/curso: (1) (2) (3) (4) Otros _____

Idioma:

Español como lengua materna (nativo) () País de origen _____
 Español como lengua de herencia (2a generación) () País de origen _____
 Sueco () _____
 Otro () _____
 Cantidad de años como estudiante de español _____
 Estancias en países de habla hispana (duración y lugar) _____

1. **SITUACIONES. Escribe del modo más espontáneo posible lo que dirías tú/ diría la persona en cuestión en estas situaciones.**

Situación 1

Has comprado un sofá muy caro. Después de solo un mes de uso, se rompe. Llamas a la tienda donde lo compraste y dices:

Situación 2

En el restaurante pides una arepa rellena de huevos de codorniz y cuando te la estás comiendo te percatas que el relleno no es con huevos de esa ave sino con huevos de gallina, te diriges hacia el mesero y le dices:

Situación 3

Estás en un restaurante con la familia cenando. El camarero no está haciendo su trabajo bien, tarda en servirles, se le cae la coca-cola encima de tu plato y no es nada agradable. ¿Qué haces/dices?

Situación 4

Al llegar al aeropuerto y recoger tu equipaje enviado de forma especial y de costo adicional, sientes, al mover el paquete, que el contenido se ha roto. Te acercas a información y dices:

Situación 5

El cajero de un restaurante usualmente se queda dormido sentado en su silla frente al mostrador, su jefe lo ha pillado 3 días seguidos en una misma semana. ¿Qué le dice?

Situación 6

Estás en el metro yendo al trabajo, estás tranquilo escuchando música y leyendo el periódico. De repente, una señora te pasa y te pega con su codo en la cara.
 ¿Qué le dices?

Situación 7

Es tu cumpleaños y a tu hermano se le olvida. No te llama, no te manda ninguna carta. Cuando sí te llama una semana más tarde, le dices:

Situación 8

Has quedado para tomar un café con un amigo íntimo. Un día, hace tiempo, le prestaste 100 coronas, todavía te acuerdas de este momento y todavía te molesta no haber recibido el dinero de vuelta, ahora se van a ver de nuevo. ¿Qué haces/dices?

Situación 9

Cada vez que el novio se queda a dormir en casa de la novia, le deja el asiento del inodoro subido; también le deja la ropa tirada el suelo. ¿Qué le dice ella al novio?

Situación 10

Es domingo y son las 10 de la noche. Te preparas para irte a dormir, cuando tu vecino del piso superior enciende el aparato de sonido a todo volumen. Asomas la cabeza por el balcón. ¿Qué le gritas?

Situación 11

Recibes una prueba corregida por tu profesor y ves que ha corregido mal y que te faltan varios puntos. ¿Qué le dices?

Situación 12

Tu novia te engaña con tu mejor amigo. ¿Qué le dices?
