# Motivation

Pragmatic skills usually do not receive dedicated, explicit instruction in L2 classrooms. This study aims to document how L1-English L2-Spanish speakers in university L2 Spanish classes at various proficiency levels produce politeness in information-seeking yes-no questions and imperatives, with a focus on intonational strategies. This research will help determine how parts of the L2 pragmatic and intonation systems are developed, both of which are understudied domains in L2 research.

# Background literature

## astruc2016intonational

Production of politeness strategies used by 14 adult L1 UK English beginner L2 Spanish and 12 L1 Spanish participants.

Native speaker data collected via discourse completion task, consisting of offers and requests controlled for social distance, power, and the cost of the request/offer.

28 speech acts of L2 speaker data collected by oral assignments recorded by students as part of their classwork. Assignments were randomly selected by tutor based on the student’s perceived proficiency by tutor. Students left telephone message for friend asking what they did last night, suggesting something they could do together that weekend, and request for a call back.

Investigated results through Brown and Levinson’s (1987) universal model of linguistic politeness and investigated intonation through the Autosegmental Metrical framework (Ladd 1996).

Native speakers combine use of different lexical and morpho-syntactic devices with specific intonational patterns.

L2 Spanish used limited range of morpho-syntactic strategies, reinforced with intonation that are often transferred from L1 eg falls typical of polite UK English.

This is a novel study investigating intonational strategies of politeness in L2 Spanish. I would like to build off of this by having a larger sample size of speech acts, a range of proficiencies so that we can see how politeness strategies may develop, and a different elicitation task. Since the students are being evaluated for homework, this may not be representative of their most natural speech productions, as they may have practiced or repeated the audio various times to “get it just right”. Instead, I would like to use a discourse completion task.

## herrero2020perception

Perception of intonational strategies of politeness for commands and polite requests compared between 26 L1 Spanish speakers and 22 L1 Chinese L2 Spanish speakers. The L2 Spanish participants were in a B1 level Spanish course and had lived for at least 3 years in Spain before study.

Stimuli produced by 4 L1 Spanish speakers. 20 sentences, each produced twice: once as a command, once as a request, so 40 utterances total, 10 from each speaker, controlled for power, distance, and ranking of imposition.

Participants rated sentences on a 5-point Likert scale according to degree of politeness (1 = most impolite, 5 = most polite).

L2 Spanish perceived polite requests as less polite than L1 Spanish. L1 and L2 Spanish patterned similarly for politeness of commands. L2 Spanish don’t perceive prosodic cues of commands vs requests as clearly as L1 Spanish.

Suggests that L1 Chinese L2 Spanish don’t rely on prosodic cues as much for politeness. They may consider all imperatives as impolite.

## herrero2020unintentional

Perception of requests produced by L1 Mandarin L2 Spanish in Madrid, evaluated by 90 L1 Spanish. L2 participants enrolled in A2/B1 level Spanish language courses. Stimuli created by creating roleplay situations (e.g. asking a client of a restaurant to wait a minute for a free table) and instructed to be as polite as possible. 100 stimuli selected divided into 3 sets of 33 target items. L1 Spanish read the context, were asked to imagine themselves in the situation, and then listened to stimuli. They rated the utterances on a 6-point Likert scale (0 = most impolite, 5 = most polite).

Only 16 (of the 100 target items) were evaluated as impolite. These utterances were analyzed within the Melodic Analysis of Speech framework (Font and Cantero 2009). [NEED TO CHECK THIS FRAMEWORK OUT.]

Took relevant F0 values (mainly vowels), calculated percentage of variation of each absolute value with regard to previous value, which was then standardized [at what point of the vowel did they take the F0 value?].

Analysis revealed that the 16 utterances perceived as impolite coincided with melodies associated with impoliteness in Spanish e.g. final fall, peak on “no” in “No llame más”, peak on “tú” in “Quiero que tú cambie”.

None of the 16 utterances use intonational strategies to mitigate the lexical-grammatical aggressiveness such as final inflections circumflexes, prominence in unstressed vowels, final ascending interrogative inflections and suspended finals [where did they get these cues from?]. Even though they used other pragmatic strategies (e.g. “gracias”), utterances were still perceived as impolite.

Demonstrates the importance of teaching intonation in the L2 classroom, as lexical-grammatical features do not seem to be sufficient to mitigate impoliteness.

## estebas2014evaluation

Compares the evaluative differences of pitch range in Spanish and English. For example, a sentence “it was lovely” ~ “riquísimo” in English and Spanish differ in natural production, despite sharing similar speech acts. In English, a “broader” pitch range (e.g. higher pitch excursion) is a natural response, whereas a “narrower” pitch range is natural in Spanish. If the English utterance were produced with a narrow pitch range, it would be considered as rude, whereas a broad pitch range in Spanish would be considered over-excited. Results in misunderstandings, and could be perceived as offensive or impolite.

Hypotheses: 1) sentences produced with low pitch range will be evaluated as “polite” in Spanish and “rude” in English; 2) sentences produced with high pitch range will be interpreted as “polite” in English and “over-excited” in Spanish.

Hypotheses evaluated by perception test.

1 bilingual Spanish-English speaker produced 2 utterances in response to the question What did you buy ~ ¿Qué compraste? ; Mandarins ~ Mandarinas. Utterances manipulated in Praat to alter scaling of F0 speak, while maintaining steepness of slope in four degrees (from high to low in English and low to high in Spanish), so 10 items in total.

15 L1 Madrid Spanish and 15 L1 UK English completed perception test. Participants listened to 25 repetitions of stimuli in their L1 and evaluated if they were an *expected response* or *non-expected*. They were instructed that “expected” means “natural, polite or nice”, whereas “non-expected” meant “rude, impolite, or over-excited”. Over 375 stimuli evaluated in total.

Results show categorical cut-offs for both English and Spanish stimuli. 96.5% of English utterances produced with a high pitch range evaluated as *expected*. 61.5% of English utterances produced with narrow pitch range evaluated as *non-expected*, which indicates that a narrow pitch range can still be evaluated as polite in English.

Spanish data is more categorical. 91.1% of narrow pitch range utterances evaluated as *expected*, whereas only 17% of broad pitch range utterances were evaluated as *non-expected*.

Highlights importance of instruction on intonation in the L2 classroom to prevent miscommunications.

[I’m not sure how I feel about the evaluative method. The bundles “expected, natural, polite or nice” and “unexpected, rude, impolite or overexcited” seem really loaded.]

## bernal2018teaching

Spanish sociopragmatics from sociocultural perspective, focusing on face management, politeness, and impoliteness in natural colloquial conversations in L1 Spanish. Discourse analysis of authentic, colloquial conversations in the area of Valencia, Spain. Develops categories for studying (im)politeness, which sometimes may overlap.

[Not sure that this is entirely relevant for my paper, need to read it fully.]

## mennen2015beyond

L2 Intonation Learning theory (LILt). L1 and L2 intonational differences categorized by four dimensions (with comparisons between H\* L% in Spanish & English):

1. Inventory & distribution of categorical phonological elements (systemic)

2. Phonetic implementation of categorical elements (realizational)

3. Functionality of categorical elements/tunes (semantic)

4. Frequency of use of categorical elements (frequency)

[Need to see what politeness strategies are common in General American English intonation. Need to see what varieties of Spanish Rutgers students are exposed to and compare.]

## brown1987politeness

[Need to read.]

Vergis et al. (in press)

Caballero et al. (2018)

Font and Cantero (2009) – Melodic Analysis of Speech framework

Alcón Soler and Martínez-Flor (2008) – “interlanguage pragmatics”

Bravo (2005) sociocultural pragmatics.

# Research questions

1. What strategies do L2 Spanish speakers use to express politeness at varying proficiency levels?
2. What L1 English influences are in the production of politeness at the intonational level in L2 Spanish?

# Hypotheses

Need to see what common strategies there are in English. Possibly use LiLT model to make predictions? Or Melodic Analysis of Speech framework, which I need to read more about.

# Participants

How should I group proficiency levels? Low, intermediate, high?

How many participants would be needed in each group? Ask Joseph about power analysis?

# Methodology

Lextale.

Discourse completion task. Elicit yes-no questions and imperatives. Control for power, distance, and ranking of imposition (Brown & Levison 1987).

How many items?

Is there really a point to this if we don’t include a perception experiment as well?