

Declining an invitation: A cross-cultural study of pragmatic strategies in American English and Latin American Spanish¹

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Abstract

This study investigated the preference for and use of politeness strategies (direct and indirect) by native speakers and advanced non-native speakers of Spanish when declining an invitation (role-play) in three levels of social status (equal and unequal [higher and lower]). Thirty subjects participated in the study (15 males and 15 females): 10 Latin American speakers of Spanish (SPN–SPN), 10 Americans speaking Spanish (ENG–SPN), and 10 Americans speaking English (ENG–ENG). The variables of gender, education, age, and Spanish dialect were controlled. Significant differences were observed between the SPN–SPN and the ENG–SPN groups in six strategies: Alternative, Set Condition, Hedging, Promise of Future Acceptance, Solidarity, and Positive Opinion. Results suggested that there is a high degree of interlanguage variation in the use of and preference for refusal strategies among the ENG–SPN group. Regarding the preference for direct strategies, the ENG–ENG group was more direct than the SPN–SPN group; the ENG–SPN group exhibited an intermediate frequency of directness. It was noted that the preference for direct strategies was conditioned by the social status of the situation. Positive and negative transfer of these strategies was also attested. As for the transfer of L1 sociocultural knowledge, the subjects' performance and verbal reports showed that the lack of L2 sociocultural knowledge was a crucial factor affecting the advanced non-native speakers' interlanguage. Pedagogical implications for the L2 classroom are also suggested.

Introduction

The notion of communicative competence represents a major challenge in the acquisition of the sociocultural values of any language. This concept was introduced by Hymes to refer to the acquisition of 'competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom,

when, where, in what manner' (1972: 277). Extending this notion to second language (L2) contexts, Saville-Troike observed that communicative competence 'involves the social and the cultural knowledge speakers are presumed to have which enables them to use and interpret linguistic forms' (1996: 363).

An important aspect of communicative competence was described by Searle (1969), who suggested that speaking a language is performing speech acts, acts such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making promises, and so on. In this paper, the term speech act will be understood as a functional unit in communication (Cohen 1996). Full mastery of communicative competence requires a native-like knowledge of sociocultural rules. Cohen and Olshtain referred to sociocultural ability as 'the respondents' skill at selecting speech act strategies that are appropriate given (a) the culture involved, (b) the age and sex of the speakers, (c) their social class and occupations, and (d) their roles and status in the interaction' (1994: 145). Achieving effective communicative competence in an L2 constitutes a complex task and a 'continual concern for language learners' (Cohen 1996: 383) because it implies a knowledge of the social values of the target culture and the ability to produce appropriate speech act strategies used in a particular situation.

The literature of first-language (L1) and L2 speech act performance has examined cross-cultural variation of different speech acts in numerous languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Jordanian, Korean, and Spanish). This literature has examined, among other things, apologies (Cohen and Olshtain 1981; Cohen, Olshtain, and Rosenstein 1986; Olshtain and Cohen 1983; Wolfson, Marmor, and Jones 1989; Cohen and Olshtain 1993); complaints (Cohen and Olshtain 1993; Frescura 1993; Olshtain and Weinbach 1986); compliments (Manes and Wolfson 1981; Nelson and Hall 1999); disagreeing and requesting (García 1989; Beebe and Takahashi 1989); expressing gratitude (Eisenstein and Bodman 1986); invitations (Wolfson 1981; Mao 1994); refusals (Al-Issa 1998; Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford 1991; Beebe and Cummings 1996; Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz 1990; Cramer 1997; Houck and Gass 1996; Iwata 1999; Kodama 1996; Kinjo 1987; Luyh 1992; Nelson, Al Batal, and El Bakari 1998; Robinson 1992; Takahashi and Beebe 1987; Widjaja 1997); requests (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989; García 1993; Hill 1997; Márquez Reiter 1997; Mir-Fernández 1994; Rinnert and Kobayashi 1999; Rose 1992; Scarcella 1979; Takahashi 1996; Walters 1979), and suggestions (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford 1990; Koike 1996).

The literature in Spanish related to the production of the speech act of refusing an invitation, the focus of this study, is limited to L1 Peruvian and Venezuelan sociocultural settings (García 1992, 1999), and to L1

and L2 speakers of Puerto Rican Spanish (Ramos 1991) and Peninsular Spanish (Margalef-Boada 1993). More empirical studies examining the preference for and use of politeness strategies in other sociocultural settings are needed among native speakers (NSs) and advanced L2 learners to provide additional insights regarding the nature of interlanguage pragmatics.

The studies above suggest that speech act performance in an L2 is a complex task for non-native speakers (NNSs) because their speech needs to reflect the appropriate strategies used by NSs of the target language. Failure to speak appropriately according to the strategies used by NSs or the inability to understand what is meant by what is said will result in a communicative or pragmatic failure (Thomas 1983). Pragmatic failure may lead to a transfer of the pragmatic strategies used in the L1 to the L2. From a sociolinguistic perspective, pragmatic transfer refers to the 'transfer of L1 sociocultural communicative competence in performing L2 speech acts or any other aspect of L2 conversation, where the speaker is trying to achieve a particular function of language' (cited in Beebe *et al.* 1990: 56).

Kasper distinguished two types of pragmatic transfer: positive transfer occurs 'when learners' production of a pragmatic feature is the same (structurally, functionally, distributionally) as a feature used by target language speakers in the same context and when this feature is paralleled by a feature in learners' L1' (1998: 193). Negative transfer, on the other hand, is observed 'when a pragmatic feature in the interlanguage is (structurally, functionally, distributionally) the same as in L1 but different from L2' (1998: 194). Instances of negative pragmatic transfer in the L2 may be motivated by three main factors: 1) low level of linguistic proficiency in the L2 (Scarcella 1979; Takahashi 1996), 2) lack of L2 sociocultural knowledge (Widjaja 1997), and 3) the level of social status (equal and unequal) in the situation (Beebe and Takahashi 1989; Beebe *et al.* 1990; Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford 1990, 1991; Nelson *et al.* 1998). Sociocultural inappropriateness in apology situations in NNSs has been examined in Cohen and Olshtain (1981). The issue of sociocultural inappropriateness in interlanguage pragmatics, especially in the speech act of declining an invitation, however, needs to be examined more extensively.

This paper begins by reviewing the literature on politeness followed by an examination of one study on Spanish refusals. Next, the results of the current study, which compare the use of politeness strategies between NSs and advanced NNSs of Spanish, will be presented.

Theoretical framework

Brown and Levinson (1987) viewed language functions or speech acts as face threatening acts (FTAs) in that the moment we do something with

language – for instance, promising, advising, ordering, or inviting – we threaten the hearer's self image. As a result of this threat, the hearer resorts to a series of strategies to defend his/her public image. These language strategies serve to minimize or eliminate such threats. Brown and Levinson proposed what they considered to be a universal model of politeness strategies comprising five categories: bald on record, off record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and do-nothing. Bald on record strategies are usually performed by means of a direct speech act (e. g., 'turn off the light'). Off-record strategies, on the other hand, are indirect uses of the language where the speaker's communicative intention is vague or ambiguous (e. g., understatement and rhetorical questions). With respect to these two strategies, Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey refer to a direct style of communication as one which 'explicitly states one's feelings, wants, and needs' (1988: 100), whereas an indirect style refers to 'verbal messages that camouflage and conceal the speaker's true intentions in terms of their wants, needs, and goals in the discourse situation' (1988: 100). Positive politeness strategies are used to satisfy the hearer's desire to be liked or acknowledged (e. g., solidarity). Negative politeness strategies, on the other hand, are used to satisfy the hearer's desire to be respected and recognized. Finally, do-nothing strategies are those strategies whereby the speaker chooses to remain silent.

In her study of communicative speech act patterns, García (1992) examined the politeness strategies used by Peruvian speakers when refusing an invitation in one role-play situation in which the interlocutors were of equal status. In the role-play situation, the twenty participants (10 males and 10 females) were told to decline an invitation to a female interlocutor. These strategies were analyzed according to Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness and revised by Scollon and Scollon (1983) into two categories: solidarity and deference. These strategies were then classified into Head Acts or Supportive Moves (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989). According to García, the speech act for refusing an invitation is comprised of two stages: 1. invitation–response, and 2. insistence–response. The second stage of the speech act was used because, according to the author, in this Peruvian sociocultural setting, the act of insistence constitutes a politeness strategy, an expected behavior in this society; not insisting 'might make the invitation sound insincere and the potential guest feel unwanted' (1992: 237). Results were provided for each stage of the interaction. In the first stage, both male and female participants chose deference politeness over solidarity politeness strategies. Unlike the first stage, in the second stage of the interaction, participants preferred using solidarity politeness strategies as Head Acts.

García concluded that in this Peruvian cultural setting, 'insistence was a cultural expectation' (1992: 234).

Refusals constitute a major cross-cultural challenge for NNSs because they require a high level of pragmatic competence. Refusals involve long, negotiated sequences resulting in 'some degree of indirectness' (Beebe *et al.* 1990: 56), especially because the person who refuses tends to mitigate the force of the speech act. Because refusals are complex speech acts and are culture-specific, the refusal of an invitation may require long sequences of negotiations whereby the interlocutors negotiate an agreement. Finally, refusals are sensitive to other sociolinguistic variables, such as status and gender. Beebe *et al.* (1990), Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990), and Nelson *et al.* (1998) observed that maintaining unequal social status with the speaker and the hearer affects the use of speech act strategies. In her studies of Spanish invitations (refusing and requesting), García (1992, 1999) reported differences between male and female participants in equal-status situations.

One objective of the present paper will be to investigate the similarities and differences between L1 and L2 politeness strategies employed by NSs and NNSs when declining an invitation in three levels of social status (equal and unequal [higher and lower]). This paper will analyze the strategies that constitute the speech act of declining an invitation, taking into account the frequency of refusal strategies or semantic formulas (Fraser 1981). In the framework of Corpus Linguistics, Caravedo suggested that 'quantitative analysis is the most appropriate method for accurately capturing both heterogeneity and homogeneity, as well as that which is *relatively* stable in the broadest sense' (1999: 78, my translation and my emphasis).

A second objective will be to examine the degree of directness between the participants when declining an invitation. A brief description of particular instances of direct refusals among the three groups will be provided. A third objective of this paper is to examine some of the factors that influence transfer of L1 sociocultural knowledge to L2 contexts when performing the speech act. The final objective of the current study will be to examine the participants' social perceptions with respect to the act of declining an invitation by means of a retrospective verbal report (RVR) (Cohen 1998; Ericsson and Simon 1993). As observed in the speech act literature, the use of RVR has its limitations (Cohen 1987, 1998).

The following research questions will be investigated:

1. When NSs and advanced NNSs of a language decline an invitation, what politeness strategies are selected and what is the degree of politeness displayed by the two groups?

2. In declining an invitation, do NSs and NNSs use the same degree of directness to an interlocutor of equal, lower, or higher status? If not, is the use of direct strategies conditioned by the social status of the situation?
3. Is there evidence of transfer of L1 sociocultural knowledge to L2 contexts when performing the act of declining an invitation? If so, in what contexts does L1 transfer occur?

Method

Subjects

Thirty subjects participated in this study: ten Latin American Spanish speakers speaking Spanish² (SPN–SPN) (mean age: 29.6 years), ten Americans speaking Spanish (ENG–SPN) (mean age: 32.7 years), and ten Americans speaking English (ENG–ENG) (mean age: 30 years). Each group contained five male and five female speakers. To keep the variable of education constant, participants in the SPN–SPN and the ENG–SPN groups were graduate students finishing their master's or doctoral studies in Spanish at the University of Minnesota. Thus, the ENG–SPN group had an advanced level of Spanish proficiency. All NNSs identified their Spanish dialect as Latin American and had lived in a Latin American country before (i. e., eight had lived in Mexico, one in Honduras, and one in Bolivia).

Materials and procedures for data collection

To obtain natural speech act performance, Wolfson pointed out that data need to be gathered 'through [direct] observation and participation in a great variety of spontaneously occurring speech situations' (1981: 9). Other researchers, however, have noted some disadvantages with respect to naturalistic data gathering (Cohen 1996; Kasper 1999). Thus, for the current study an open role-play situation, rather than spontaneous situations, was selected (cf. Scarcella 1979).

The data collection instrument consisted of five simulated open-role play situations: one apology, one complaint, and three refusals to an invitation. Of these, the first two speech acts (the apology and the complaint) were used as distractors; the other three situations served as the experimental role-plays (see Appendix A). Each role-play required a refusal to a person of higher status (employee to boss), one to a person of a lower status (professor to student), and one to a person of equal status (friend to friend). The order of the role-plays was randomized. All oral interviews took place at an office at the University of Minnesota. Before

the interview, the researcher asked each participant to fill out a consent form giving their permission. If they were willing to participate, they were given a background questionnaire to fill out.

Two female research assistants participated in the study: a Peruvian native Spanish speaker served as the Spanish speaker for the two groups of Spanish data (SPN–SPN and ENG–SPN), and an American speaker of English interacted with the ENG–ENG group. The oral interview was divided into two sessions which were both tape-recorded: the role-play interaction and the RVR. Each participant was asked to engage in a role-play conversation with the research assistant. Immediately after the interview, the audio tape was played back and the researcher carried out the RVR interview (see Appendix B). Each oral interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes.

Data analysis

In the present study, García's (1992) analysis of two stages of the invitation was followed: 1) invitation–response, and 2) insistence–response. The refusals were classified according to a modified version of Beebe *et al.*'s (1990) classification of refusals (see Appendix C for examples of each strategy). In addition to the classification of refusal strategies proposed by Beebe *et al.*, and following the classification proposed by Scollon and Scollon (1983), the category of Solidarity was added.

The 90 separate role-play interactions were tape-recorded and transcribed according to the conventions designed by Jefferson (1986: ix–xvi). The refusals were analyzed as consisting of a sequence of semantic formulas or main strategies used by the participants in each group. The most frequent strategies used by the ENG–SPN (interlanguage data) were compared to the L1 baseline groups (SPN–SPN, ENG–ENG).

To ensure comparison among the three groups, the strategies employed by the ENG–ENG group were also analyzed in each stage of the conversation. Since an insistence is not always appropriate or expected in this sociocultural setting (United States), especially in those cases of unequal status, the strategies attested in the second stage of the interaction were counted only in those cases where the interviewer, an NS of American English, considered it appropriate to insist.

Results and discussion

In order to answer the research questions, we will examine the overall use and preference for strategies among the three groups (SPN–SPN, ENG–SPN, and ENG–ENG), including the three levels of status (equal, lower, and higher), males and females, and both stages. Next, to

account for the axiom that the use of direct strategies (Non-Performative ‘No’ and Negative Willingness [e. g., ‘I can’t’]) when declining an invitation is situation- or context-dependent, the preference for these strategies in each social status, each stage, and for each group will be analyzed. Then, the results from the retrospective verbal report with respect to the use of direct strategies in declining an invitation will be compared to those from the speech act performance data (i. e., role plays). Finally, instances of social transfer from the L1 will be examined.

Preference of strategy use among the three groups: Overall results

The number of strategies or semantic formulas used by the three groups totalled 1,320, distributed in 22 coding strategies. These data are presented in Table 1.

As Table 1 shows, the SPN–SPN group displayed the highest number of strategies ($n = 521$), followed by the ENG–SPN ($n = 498$), and, finally, the ENG–ENG group exhibited the lowest number ($n = 301$).

Based on the results in Table 1, the following general similarities and differences were observed among the three groups: of the 22 categories representing politeness strategies, only 21 were attested in the SPN–SPN and ENG–SPN groups. There were no cases of the Wish strategy (e. g., ‘I wish I could be there’) among the SPN–SPN group and no cases of the Discomfort strategy among the ENG–SPN or the ENG–ENG groups. Among the ENG–ENG group, six categories were not attested (Accepting Fault, Discomfort, Explicit Acceptance, Let Interlocutor off the Hook, Mitigated Acceptance, and Solidarity), resulting in the use of only 16 categories. Examples of these strategies which were attested in the SPN–SPN data are displayed in (1)–(6):

(1) Accepting Fault

M # 1: *Es mi culpa. Me despisté y se me descontroló todo.*
‘It’s my fault. I totally forgot about it and everything got messed up.’

(2) Discomfort

M # 4: *Pues ahora me pones en un compromiso.*
F # 5: ‘Well, now I’m in a bind.’
Estoy contra la espada y la pared.
‘I’m between a rock and a hard place.’

(3) Explicit Acceptance

M # 4: *Perfecto. Paso allá cuando termine el examen.*
‘Perfect. I’ll come by after I finish the exam.’

Table 1. *Total strategies used by all participants (N = 30 [ten in each group]; n = 1,320). Includes: males and females, three groups (SPN–SPN, ENG–SPN, ENG–ENG), and three levels of status: equal (friend–friend) and unequal (student–professor; employee–boss).*

Coding Categories	SPN–SPN		ENG–SPN		ENG–ENG		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Non-Performative ‘No’	5	1	9	1.8	5	1.7	19	1.4
Negative Willingness	15	2.9	17	3.4	27	9	59	4.5
Subtotal – Direct	20	3.9	26	5.2	32	10.7	78	5.9
Mitigated Refusal	21	4	18	3.6	17	5.6	56	4.2
Indefinite Reply	61	11.7	77	15.5	25	8.3	163	12.3
Excuse/Explanation	66	12.7	58	11.6	33	11	157	11.9
Wish	0	0	2	0.4	4	1.3	6	0.5
Regret/Apology	34	6.5	44	8.8	35	11.6	113	8.6
Repetition of Request	23	4.4	20	4	7	2.3	50	3.8
Hedging	9	1.7	22	4.4	10	3.3	41	3.1
Alternative	8	1.5	21	4.2	11	3.7	40	3
Promise Future Accept	13	2.5	3	0.6	5	1.7	21	1.6
Set Condition for Future/ Past Acceptance	36	6.9	13	2.6	7	2.3	56	4.2
Let Interlocut off Hook	4	0.8	2	0.4	0	0	6	0.5
Subtotal – Indirect	275	52.7	280	56.1	154	51.1	709	53.7
Explicit Acceptance	11	2.1	5	1	0	0	16	1.2
Mitigated Acceptance	8	1.5	6	1.2	0	0	14	1.1
Solidarity	43	8.3	15	3	0	0	58	4.4
Subtotal – Solidarity	62	11.9	26	5.2	0	0	88	6.7
Positive Opinion	56	10.7	81	16.3	75	24.9	212	16.1
Request Info Event	38	7.3	34	6.8	6	2	78	5.9
Discomfort	4	0.8	0	0	0	0	4	0.3
Accept Fault	4	0.8	1	0.2	0	0	5	0.4
Well-wishing	9	1.7	4	0.8	8	2.7	21	1.6
Gratitude	53	10.2	46	9.2	26	8.6	125	9.5
Subtotal – Adjuncts	164	31.5	166	33.3	115	38.2	445	33.8
Total Results	521	100	498	99.8	301	100	1320	100

(4) Let Interlocutor off the Hook

M # 3: *No, no, no te preocupes.*
 ‘No, no, don’t worry about it.’

(5) Mitigated Acceptance

M # 3: *Sí, creo que es posible.*
 ‘Yes, I think it’ll be possible.’

(6) Solidarity

F # 1: ... *pero vamos a tratar esto: yo me voy con mis amigos un ratito, les explico que es el cumpleaños que me había olvidado, y no van a tener problema, van a entender.*

‘... well, how about this: I’ll go with my friends for a little while, I’ll explain that there’s a birthday party I had forgotten about, and it’ll be fine, they’ll understand.’

The L1 baseline data groups showed differences and similarities with respect to the order of most of the frequently employed strategies. There was no category which occupied the same rank for either group. For example, the strategy with the highest frequency for the SPN–SPN group was Excuse/Explanation (12.7 percent [66 cases]), whereas for the ENG–ENG group, the strategy most frequently used was Positive Opinion (24.9 percent [75 cases]). Among the ENG–ENG group, the Excuse/Explanation strategy ranked third (11 percent [33 cases]), whereas the SPN–SPN data displayed the Positive Opinion strategy (10.7 percent [56 cases]) in this position. Regarding similarities, these groups exhibited similar frequencies in the following strategies: Regret/Apology, Alternative, Hedging, as well as the direct strategy Non-Performative ‘No’. This indicates, at least for these strategies, that when declining an invitation, NSs of Spanish and English utilize these strategies with similar preference and frequency. Examples of these strategies are shown in (7)–(12):

(7) Excuse/Explanation (ENG–ENG)

M # 5: ‘... but, I just have a prior commitment.’

(8) Positive Opinion (ENG–ENG)

M # 5: ‘That sounds exciting. Congratulations. You must be really excited about that.’

(9) Regret/Apology (SPN–SPN)

Qué pena contigo. Me disculpo contigo de una vez.

‘I feel so bad. Let me just apologize right now.’

(10) Alternative (SPN–SPN)

Haré lo posible por estar contigo un día después, o te invito un café.

‘I’ll do what I can to be there the day after, or I’ll buy you a coffee.’

(11) Hedging (ENG–ENG)

‘It’s possible. I’m not quite sure.’

(12) Direct (Non-Performative ‘No’) (ENG–ENG)

‘No, darn it. I’m sorry.’

The SPN–SPN and the ENG–SPN groups also displayed similarities and differences. As shown in Table 1, these groups displayed six strategies (Indefinite Reply, Gratitude, Requesting Information about Event, Repetition of Request, Mitigated Refusal, and Negative Willingness) in the same descending order and with similar frequencies. In fact, chi-square results indicated no significant differences in the use of these strategies between the two groups, suggesting that the speakers in the ENG–SPN group have achieved a high level of sociocultural competence in the use of these strategies. The following strategies in examples (13)–(18) were attested in the ENG–SPN group:

(13) Indefinite Reply

M # 4: *bueno, voy a intentar de hacerlo. A ver si puedo pasar un rato.*

‘well, I’m gonna try to do it. I’ll see if I can stop by for a while.’

(14) Gratitude

M # 2: *bueno, gracias, muchas gracias. Eres muy amable.*

‘well, thanks, thanks a lot. That’s very kind of you.’

(15) Requesting Information about Event

M # 4: *A qué hora más o menos va a empezar?*

‘Around what time will it start?’

(16) Repetition of Request

M # 5: *Este viernes es la fiesta, no?*

‘This Friday is the party, right?’

(17) Mitigated Refusal

M # 1: *Me parece que no puedo venir.*

‘It looks like I won’t be able to come.’

M # 5: *no voy a poder el sábado por la noche.*

‘I won’t be able to on Saturday night.’

(18) Negative Willingness

M # 2: *no puedo, no podré.*

‘I can’t, I won’t be able to.’

Significant differences between these groups were attested in six other categories, however. The chi-square (χ^2) results for these strategies are shown in Table 2:

Table 2. *SPN–SPN and ENG–SPN groups: Significant differences in strategy use.*
($N = 20$; $n = 320$)

Strategy	SPN–SPN (n)	ENG–SPN (n)	chi-square
Alternative	8	21	5.83 *
Set Condition for Fut/ Past Acceptance	36	13	10.79 *
Hedging	9	22	5.45 *
Promise Future Acceptance	13	3	6.25 *
Solidarity	43	15	13.52 *
Positive Opinion	56	81	4.56 *

$df = 1$, $\chi^2 \geq 3.84$, $p = 0.05$

* Significant difference

For these particular strategies, when compared to the SPN–SPN baseline data, it appears that even these advanced learners of Spanish have not fully acquired these sociocultural strategies so as to show native-like competence in the context of declining an invitation. The following strategies, shown in examples (19)–(24), were attested in the ENG–SPN group:

(19) Alternative

M # 1: ... *pero por qué no hacemos algo diferente otro día?*
'but why don't we do something else another day?'

(20) Set Condition for Future or Past Acceptance

F # 3: *Vamos a pasar ahí, si podemos.*
'We'll stop by, if we can.'
Si tengo la energía, vamos a pasar por la casa.
'If I have the energy, we'll come by your house.'

(21) Hedging

M #5: *No sé si vamos a poder, y no sé qué podemos hacer.*
'I don't know whether we'll be able to, and I don't know what we can do.'

(22) Promise of Future Acceptance

F # 3: *Te hablo. Eso te prometo.*
'I'll call you. I promise.'

(23) Solidarity

M # 3: *La verdad es que sí me da mucho gusto que le hayan ofrecido ese puesto.*

‘The truth is that I’m really glad they’ve offered you that position.’

M # 5: *Usted como jefa ha sido excelente. Estamos todos tristes de que se vaya.*

‘You have been an excellent boss. We’re all sad that you’re leaving.’

(24) Positive Opinion

M # 4: *ah, me parece muy bien.*

‘Oh, that sounds great.’

Results of the ENG–SPN and the ENG–ENG groups revealed the following similarities in their use of strategies. Three strategies (Positive Opinion, Excuse/Explanation, and Alternative) occurred in the same descending order (first, third, and eighth position). The category of Positive Opinion was the most frequently used among these speakers (ENG–SPN [16.3 percent; 81 cases] and ENG–ENG [24.9 percent; 75 cases]). This suggests that there is some degree of negative transfer of the Positive Opinion strategy to the L2 Spanish context. Unlike these two groups, the SPN–SPN group, disfavored this strategy with lower frequency (10.7 percent [56 cases]), ranking it in third position. For the ENG–SPN and ENG–ENG groups, similar frequencies were attested in the use of three additional strategies: Mitigated Refusal, Promise of Future Acceptance, and Wish. The examples shown in (25)–(27) were attested in the ENG–ENG group:

(25) Mitigated Refusal

M # 1: ‘I don’t think I’m gonna be able to make it on Saturday.’

(26) Promise of Future Acceptance

F # 4: ‘... that one I’ll be able to attend, no matter what.’

(27) Wish

M # 5: ‘I really wish I could.’

The use of the Hedging strategy, namely, the use of expressions of uncertainty (e. g., ‘I’m not quite sure,’ ‘I don’t know how I could get out of it’), among the ENG–SPN speakers (4.4 percent [22 cases]) was significantly different from that of the SPN–SPN (1.7 percent [9 cases]) and the

ENG–ENG (3.3 percent [10 cases]) groups. When the Hedging strategy was compared among the three groups, the following χ^2 results, shown in Table 3, were obtained:

Table 3. *Preference for the Hedging strategy among the three groups (SPN–SPN, ENG–SPN, ENG–ENG) (N = 30)*

SPN–SPN vs. ENG–SPN	$\chi^2 = 5.45 *$	$\chi^2 \geq 3.84, df = 1, p = 0.05$
ENG–ENG vs. ENG–SPN	$\chi^2 = 4.50 *$	$\chi^2 \geq 3.84, df = 1, p = 0.05$

These results suggest that among the three groups, the advanced NNSs of Spanish favored the use of the Hedging strategy significantly more than the two baseline groups. It can be speculated that the presence of this strategy in the ENG–SPN group may be a product of their interlanguage development. More research is needed with advanced NNSs of Spanish to confirm this hypothesis.

Finally, differences were also detected in each social status with respect to the number of strategies used by each group in the three levels of status. This is illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. *Two stages. Total Number of strategies used per group and per social status (N = 30; n = 1,320)*

	Equal Status	Higher Staus	Lower Status
SPN–SPN	193	169	159
ENG–SPN	185	146	167
ENG–ENG	109	91	101
Total	487	406	427

Table 4 shows that all three groups used more strategies when declining the invitation from a friend. For Americans speaking English, Beebe *et al.* (1990) found similar results. The SPN–SPN group used more strategies involving more negotiation, when they were in a higher social status (i. e., professor), and fewer strategies when they were in a lower social status (i. e., employee). These results differed from both the ENG–ENG and the ENG–SPN groups who employed more strategies when they were in a lower status position (i. e., the employee); less negotiation was involved when they were in a position of higher social status (i. e., professor).

In summary, overall results showed different preferences for politeness strategies when declining an invitation among the three groups. These results suggest that there is a high degree of interlanguage variation in the use and preference for refusal strategies among the ENG–SPN group. Negative transfer of these strategies was also attested.

Preference for direct strategies

Figure 1 shows the overall results for degree of directness among the three groups:

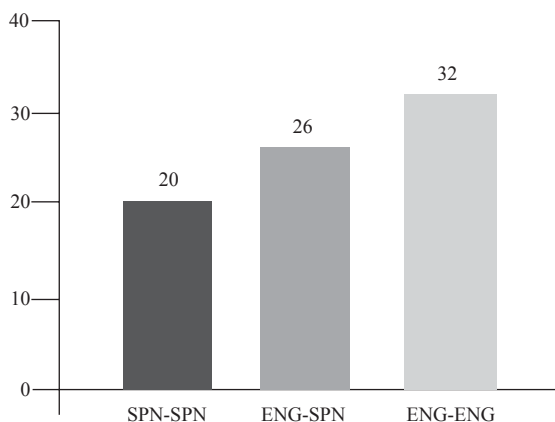


Figure 1. *Degree of directness. Three groups: SPN-SPN, ENG-SPN, ENG-ENG (N = 30; n = 78)*

With regard to the use of direct strategies (i. e., Non-Performative ‘No’ and Negative Willingness), no significant differences among the three groups were attested: SPN-SPN (3.9 percent [20 cases]); ENG-SPN (5.2 percent [26 cases]); ENG-ENG (10.7 percent [32 cases]). An examination of the data, however, revealed different degrees in the use of the strategies preferred by the three groups. The ENG-ENG group was more direct in declining an invitation, while the SPN-SPN group was less direct. The data of the ENG-SPN group displayed an intermediate frequency with respect to the baseline groups, indicating that the strategies for declining an invitation used by NNSs represented a hybrid level of directness, a product of their interlanguage development; that is, these speakers were less direct than those of the ENG-ENG group, and more direct than those in the SPN-SPN group.

It was also noted that the number of participants favoring direct strategies was conditioned by the social status of the situation. This can be observed in Table 5.

Table 5. *Number of participants favoring direct strategies per status. (N = 10 per group)*

	Equal status	Higher status	Lower status
SPN-SPN	5	3	3
ENG-SPN	2	7	5
ENG-ENG	4	5	5

As Table 5 shows, among the Latin Americans it was more common to decline an invitation using more direct strategies among friends, while a lesser degree of directness was preferred in situations of unequal status (higher and lower). On the other hand, the English baseline group showed the opposite pattern: in situations of unequal social situations, five participants preferred declining an invitation with a higher frequency of direct strategies, while in situations of equal status, only four participants favored the use of direct strategies. Finally, the ENG–SPN data showed speech act patterns displaying a tendency towards the English baseline data. The number of participants in the ENG–SPN group preferring direct strategies was most similar to the ENG–ENG group, especially in the situations of unequal status. This reflects an instance of partial negative transfer from the L1 to the L2 context. This behavior was observed in at least half of the ENG–SPN participants in situations of unequal status. The use of direct strategies displayed in each situation and in each stage of the conversation will now be examined.

Direct strategies: Results in each situation, each status, and each stage

In the equal status situation (Situation 1), the respondent declines a friend's invitation to a birthday party. Results for the first stage of the interaction can be observed in Table 6.

Table 6. *Direct strategies. Results per group, male-female, Stage 1, equal status: Friend (N = 30; n = 16)*

Category	SPN–SPN Total				ENG–SPN Total				ENG–ENG Total			
	M	F	n	%	M	F	n	%	M	F	n	%
Non-Performative 'No'	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	9.4
Negative Willingness	3	1	4	20	0	3	3	11.5	4	2	6	18.8
Total	3	1	4	20	0	3	3	11.5	6	3	9	28.2

In the first stage, the ENG–ENG group showed the highest degree of directness (28.2 percent [9 cases]), followed by SPN–SPN (20 percent [4 cases]), and the ENG–SPN (11.5 percent [3 cases]) with the lowest degree. Among the L1 groups, males were more direct than females. Of these two groups, four participants in the ENG–ENG group displayed the highest degree of directness when declining an invitation, using the Non-Performative 'No' (one male and one female). The examples shown

in (28) illustrate the use of a Non-Performative ‘No’ strategy by a male (28a) and a female (28b) ENG–ENG speaker:

(28a) M # 2: ‘no, darn it. I can’t I’m sorry, I wish I could, but *no* we’ve already got plans’

(28b) F # 5: ‘ooh, Friday, *no*, I would love to, but I can’t’

Four speakers (three males and one female) in the Spanish baseline group expressed directness with expressions of Negative Willingness. The example in (29) is an illustration of Negative Willingness by a SPN–SPN (Venezuelan) male speaker:

(29) M # 1: *tu cumpleaños, [...] claro claro, lo tenía anotado, pero sabes qué, Silvia,*
‘your birthday, [...] of course, I had it written down, but you know what Silvia
coño, no puedo ir, Silvia, me vas a matar, me vas a matar
darn, *I can’t come*, Silvia. You’re going to kill me, you’re going to kill me.’

No instances of Non-Performative ‘No’ were attested in the Spanish baseline data.

Finally, in the ENG–SPN group, only two females used a total of three expressions of directness, employing the strategy of Negative Willingness. The example shown in (30) represents a typical strategy of Negative Willingness by a female ENG–SPN speaker:

(30) F # 4: *ay, Silvia, bueno, muchas gracias, feliz cumpleaños, y muchas gracias,*
‘oh Silvia, well thanks a lot, happy birthday, and thanks a lot,
pero no me vas a creer, pero es que no puedo el viernes, imagínate,
but you’re not going to believe me, but *I really can’t* on Friday, guess what,
ya tengo planes, y estoy ocupadísima porque ya hice planes justo para el viernes,
I already have plans and I’m super busy because I made plans for Friday,
justamente para el viernes, me hubiera encanta:do pasar: la noche contigo,
specifically for Friday, I would have loved to spend that night with you,

pero es totalmente imposible
but it's just impossible.'

Surprisingly, the ENG–SPN group was the only one in which the males did not produce a direct refusal.

Only the two baseline groups (SPN–SPN, ENG–ENG) favored expressions of directness in the second stage of the interaction among friends: these were produced by three NSs of Spanish (35 percent [7 cases]) and three NSs of English (15.6 percent [5 cases]). This is illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7. *Direct strategies. Results per group, male-female, Stage 2, equal status: Friend (N = 30; n = 12)*

Category	SPN–SPN Total				ENG–SPN Total				ENG–ENG Total			
	M	F	n	%	M	F	n	%	M	F	n	%
Non-Performative 'No'	1	2	3	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Negative Willingness	4	0	4	20	0	0	0	0	3	2	5	15.6
Total	5	2	7	35	0	0	0	0	3	2	5	15.6

In both baseline groups, males showed a higher degree of directness. Unlike the first stage of the interaction, the ENG–SPN group did not show any degree of directness in the second stage.

Overall, when declining an invitation from a friend, during the first stage of the conversation, the ENG–ENG group showed a higher degree of directness in their use of strategies than both the SPN–SPN and the ENG–SPN groups. The SPN–SPN group preferred expressions of Negative Willingness (e. g., ‘no puedo’ [‘I can’t’]), rather than the most direct strategy, the Non-Performative ‘No’. The ENG–SPN group showed a total absence of direct strategies in the second stage of the interaction, indicating a low degree of sociocultural ability to decline an invitation directly among friends in an appropriate Latin American manner. This may suggest that the interlanguage system may be less direct by nature than the L1 system.³

In the higher status situation (Situation 2), the respondent, who is a university professor, declines a student’s invitation to a dinner to celebrate her graduation at her home. In this situation, as the respondent plays the role of an individual who has authority, fewer face saving stra-

tegies and a higher level of directness were expected. The results for stage 1 are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8. *Direct strategies. Results per group, male-female, Stage 1, higher status: Professor (N = 30; n = 11)*

Category	SPN-SPN Total				ENG-SPN Total				ENG-ENG Total			
	M	F	n	%	M	F	n	%	M	F	n	%
Non-Performative 'No'	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	11.5	0	0	0	0
Negative Willingness	0	1	1	5	2	0	2	7.7	2	3	5	15.6
Total	0	1	1	5	3	2	5	19.2	2	3	5	15.6

In declining the invitation to an interlocutor of lower status during the first stage of the conversation, the ENG-SPN (5 subjects [19.2 percent; 5 cases]) and ENG-ENG (4 subjects [15.6 percent; 5 cases]) groups showed a greater degree of directness than the Spanish baseline group (1 case of Negative Willingness by a female Spanish speaker). Of the two groups whose production of directness strategies outnumbered the Spanish baseline group, it was the ENG-SPN group which showed the highest degree of directness by using three instances of the Non-Performative 'No' (two females and one male). Example (31) shows a Non-Performative 'No'; strategy employed by one male ENG-SPN speaker:

(31) M # 4: *bueno, no, creo que tengo un compromiso con mi familia.*
 'Well, *no*, I think that I have plans with my family.'

Overall, in the first stage, the Spanish baseline group preferred mitigating the refusal (5 subjects [6 cases]). Mitigation of the refusal was also common in English baseline data (7 cases), and least common in the ENG-SPN group (2 cases).

In the second stage of situation 2, expressions of directness were attested in all three groups. This can be observed in Table 9.

Table 9. *Direct strategies. Results per group, male-female, Stage 2, higher status: Professor (N = 30; n = 14)*

Category	SPN-SPN Total				ENG-SPN Total				ENG-ENG Total			
	M	F	n	%	M	F	n	%	M	F	n	%
Non-Performative 'No'	0	1	1	5	3	0	3	11.5	0	0	0	0
Negative Willingness	2	2	4	20	4	0	4	15.4	1	1	2	6.2
Total	2	3	5	25	7	0	7	26.9	1	1	2	6.2

Expressions of directness were found in the Spanish baseline group (one male and one female [25 percent; 5 cases]) and in the ENG–SPN group ([26.9 percent; 7 cases]), with five males favoring this strategy. Of these two groups, the ENG–SPN group revealed a higher degree of directness using the Non-Performative ‘No’ strategy (three males) more frequently than the Spanish group (one female). The ENG–ENG group showed the lowest frequency (6.2 percent; 2 cases).

In general, during the first stage of the conversation, the ENG–ENG and the ENG–SPN groups tended to use more direct strategies when declining an invitation from a person of lower status, as in a professor to a student (5 cases in each group), than the SPN–SPN group, who favored mitigation (1 direct strategy and 6 cases of mitigated strategies [e. g., ‘creo que no va a ser posible ...’ ‘I think it won’t be possible’]). This indicates that the ENG–SPN group, who favored direct instead of mitigated strategies, showed some degree of L1 sociocultural transfer in the use of direct strategies to the L2 Spanish social context.

In the lower status situation (Situation 3), the respondent, an employee of a company in Minneapolis (for the ENG–ENG group) or of a telephone company in Latin America, must decline the boss’s invitation to a dinner with other members of the company. Unlike the previous situation in which the respondent had the authority to decline the invitation without any attempt to save face, here the respondent finds him/herself in a face-threatening situation in which the refusal of the invitation may affect the respondent’s positive face with the boss or may threaten his/her job in the future.

In the first stage, major differences were detected between the SPN–SPN group, and the ENG–SPN and ENG–ENG groups with respect to the use of direct strategies. This is shown in Table 10.

Table 10. *Direct strategies. Results per group, male-female, Stage 1, lower status: Employee (N = 30; n = 22)*

Category	SPN–SPN Total				ENG–SPN Total				ENG–ENG Total			
	M	F	n	%	M	F	n	%	M	F	n	%
Non-Performative ‘No’	0	1	1	5	3	0	3	11.5	1	0	1	3.1
Negative Willingness	1	1	2	10	3	3	6	23.1	7	2	9	28.1
Total	1	2	3	15	6	3	9	34.6	8	2	10	31.2

The Spanish baseline group (two females and one male [15 percent; 3 cases]) displayed lower frequencies of direct strategies than the other two

groups. The ENG–ENG group (three males and one female [31.2 percent; 10 cases]) and the ENG–SPN (two females and one male [34.6 percent; 9 cases]) showed the highest frequencies in the directness category. Three subjects of the ENG–SPN group favored direct strategies with a significantly higher degree of frequency than the SPN–SPN group. In fact, the advanced NNSs of Spanish revealed the highest degree of directness in declining the invitation with the Non-Performative ‘No’ strategy (two males). Example (32) shows a Non-Performative ‘No’ and an instance of Negative Willingness (‘no puedo’ ‘I can’t’), two main strategies employed by a male of the ENG–SPN group:

- (32) M # 2: *que lástima, no puedo, no podré, no, estaré fuera de Cuernavaca.*
 ‘what a shame, I can’t, I won’t be able to, no, I’ll be away from Cuernavaca.’
este sábado, tengo que ir a a Tlaxcalteco (laughs), voy a visitar a mi familia,
 this Saturday, I have to go to uh uh Tlaxcala, I am going to visit my family,
suegros, sí, sí, sí ...
 my in-laws, yeah, yeah, yeah ...’

In the second stage of the conversation, very few instances of direct strategies were attested among the three groups. This is shown in Table 11.

Table 11. *Direct strategies. Results per group, male-female, Stage 2, lower status: Employee (N = 30; n = 3)*

Category	SPN–SPN Total				ENG–SPN Total				ENG–ENG Total			
	M	F	n	%	M	F	n	%	M	F	n	%
Non-Performative ‘No’	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Negative Willingness	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	7.7	0	1	1	3.1
Total	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	7.7	0	1	1	3.1

In the English baseline data, one case (3.1 percent [one female]) of directness was attested, and two cases (7.7 percent [two males]) were attested in the ENG–SPN group; no instances were observed in the Spanish baseline data.

Overall, because the interlanguage data are most similar to that of the English baseline group, using direct strategies to decline an invitation

from a person of a higher status, it seems that the three advanced NNSs of Spanish were using almost the same strategies employed in the American English sociocultural setting. The presence of this strategy was greater in the first stage, however. Therefore, this finding indicates a transfer of L1 directness strategies to the L2 system, revealing that the ability to decline an invitation in situations of unequal (i. e., lower to higher) status has not been fully acquired by these advanced NNSs.

Retrospective verbal report

With respect to the level of directness, the speech act performance coincided with the observations of the verbal reports. The majority of the Latin Americans reported that they cannot provide a direct (or ‘*tajante*’) ‘no’ to the person who makes the invitation, regardless of the social status of the individual. In this respect, one male (Peruvian) speaker said that one has to provide an appropriate excuse which serves the purpose of indirectly refusing the invitation, instead of using a direct strategy such as ‘no’ or ‘no puedo’ (‘I can’t’). One female (Mexican) speaker, on the other hand, said that it was okay to decline an invitation to a friend using a direct ‘no puedo’ strategy, because friends understand. A direct refusal, however, does not appear to be the tendency among Latin Americans in unequal levels of status (higher or lower) because respondents do not want to lose face with their interlocutor. Thus, an indirect refusal disguised as a justified excuse saves face for both parties and contributes to a mutual understanding between the two parties. In general, the participants’ perceptions and opinions with respect to the act of declining an invitation in the three levels of social status were congruent with the frequency of direct strategies produced by these subjects.

With respect to the ENG–SPN group, it is important to note that their perceptions corresponded more closely to the Mexican dialect (eight of these participants indicated that their Spanish had been most influenced by the Mexican dialect, one by the Bolivian dialect, and one by the Honduran dialect). In response to the question, ‘how did you feel during the interaction?’, 80 percent of the participants said that they felt uncomfortable, impatient, bad, forced, and even corralled by the insistence. It is possible that these speakers have not yet reached the appropriate level of sociocultural competence of how to interact according to the conversational rules of the Latin American setting. Two participants (one male and one female) commented that the interaction with the interlocutor was fine, with a minimum degree of discomfort. These two participants were the same ones that produced the most appropriate near-native strategies, displaying an advanced level of communicative competence.

With respect to the level of directness, the majority of the ENG–SPN group said that Americans were more direct when refusing an invitation. Americans speaking Spanish said that an American professor, for instance, has the power to give a direct ‘no’, without a justified excuse; this was also the tendency when Americans refused an invitation from a person of higher status (i. e., the boss; Situation 3). Despite these observations, the majority of the Americans said that declining an invitation in Latin America and in the United States was different: ‘Americans are more direct, while Latin Americans are more flexible in their responses’. These social perceptions corresponded to the frequency and content of the direct strategies employed by these speakers. In response to the question, ‘how do you think NSs of Spanish would decline this invitation?’, four of the ENG–SPN speakers (two males and two females with the Mexican dialect) reported that they did not know. This suggests a lack of L2 sociocultural knowledge, indicating that even advanced learners of Spanish, who had previously lived in an L2 setting, were not aware of the L2 sociocultural values.

Pedagogical implications

The results of the present study demonstrate that the speech act of declining an invitation in an L2 is a complex task because it requires the acquisition of the sociocultural values of the L2 culture. To achieve sociocultural ability in an L2 goes far beyond grammatical competence (i. e., knowing the rules of morphosyntax, phonology, and semantics). This study suggests that in order to effectively communicate in a second language, the L2 learner needs to acquire the sociocultural strategies used most frequently by NSs of the L1.

It is recommended that L2 instructors incorporate in their syllabi a section devoted to L2 sociocultural information including authentic videos, visits by NSs to the L2 classroom, role-play models of NSs performing certain speech acts, etc. Sociocultural knowledge of the L2 is necessary in order to notice the strategies most commonly used by speakers of the target language. In this respect, Schmidt (1993) pointed out that for pragmatic information to be noticed and therefore available for further processing, it has to be attended to and stored in short-term memory. It is further recommended that L2 language instructors and advanced L2 learners examine and practice oral and written conversations in the classroom, discussing L2 sociocultural values

Discussion and conclusions

This study reported that the three groups (SPN–SPN, ENG–SPN, and ENG–ENG) favored similar pragmatic strategies in declining an invita-

tion; the difference, however, was in the preference for and frequency of use of these strategies.

With respect to the level of directness, no major differences were attested among the three groups. The three groups, however, displayed different degrees of preference: overall, Americans speaking English were more direct than Latin Americans. The Americans speaking Spanish exhibited an intermediate frequency of directness in between the two baseline groups. The results of this study suggest that speech act patterns, including those of both the baseline and interlanguage groups, were sensitive to context (Tarone 1993). Americans showed a higher degree of directness in situations of unequal status, whereas Latin Americans displayed a lesser degree of directness in these situations. Thus, the social status of the situation (equal/unequal) did play a role in the selection of the strategies employed in declining an invitation.

With respect to the transfer of L1 sociocultural knowledge, analysis of speech act performance and the verbal reports showed that lack of L2 sociocultural knowledge represented an important factor affecting the interlanguage system of some of the advanced NNSs. Even though the majority of these speakers displayed an advanced level of grammatical competence, the frequency and content of the strategies and the verbal reports showed that even some very advanced NNSs of Spanish did not know how to decline an invitation appropriately, nor did they know how NSs of Spanish would typically decline an invitation.

With respect to the limitations of the current study, several caveats are in order. First, the study was limited to one speech act: declining an invitation in one context (the Latin American setting). Because the sample was limited to ten participants per group ($N = 30$), the results cannot be generalized to all NSs of Spanish or English or all advanced NNSs of Spanish. Due to the different nationalities of the Latin American speakers in this study, individual sociocultural differences may reflect culture- or region-specific speech act patterns in the act of declining an invitation. However, the sociocultural patterns of the speech act of declining an invitation displayed by these participants were similar to those of García (1992) for Peruvians. To better account for specific sociocultural speech act patterns among NSs, a larger sample of one sociocultural setting is needed. In addition, the issue of negotiation when declining an invitation requires a more descriptive analysis, specifically because it is through negotiation that speech acts (at least refusals) are successfully realized.

In conclusion, the present study has investigated the selection and preference for politeness strategies between NSs and advanced NNSs of Spanish when declining an invitation in three different levels of social status. It was suggested that the act of declining an invitation in the

Latin American setting involved two stages in the conversation; it was in the second stage of the interaction where the speech act was actually realized. Finally, this study highlighted the fact that high levels of grammatical competence in the L2 do not always correspond to high levels of sociocultural ability.

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Appendix A

Oral Speech Act Data (American speakers of Spanish) Instructions:

You are asked to participate in five role-play situations. Try to respond as you would in a real situation in the Spanish-speaking country that you most closely identify with. You will read the situations in English and afterwards you will take part in a role-play with me. If there is something in the situations that you don't understand, ask me and I will explain it to you. The response to each situation will be tape recorded. Then the tape will be played back and you will be asked some questions regarding your response to the situations.

- A. Imagine that you are in (*Latin American country of your preference*). You arranged to meet a friend at the library to study together for an exam. You arrive half an hour late for the meeting.
Friend:
You:
- B. Imagine that you are in (*Latin American country of your preference*). This is the third time that your roommate is playing loud music at 3.00 in the morning. She and her friends are also singing and playing the guitar. You have to get up at 6.00 a.m. You talk to her to complain
You:
Roommate:
- C. Imagine that you are in (*Latin American country of your preference*). A friend invites you to her birthday party next Friday evening. She is inviting a select group of friends over to her house, and you are one of them, but you can't make it.
Friend:
You:
- D. Imagine that you are in (*Latin American country of your preference*). You are a professor at the *Universidad Nacional de (Latin American*

country). One of your students, with whom you worked closely on writing her B.A. thesis (tesis de licenciatura), invites you to a graduation dinner at her house next Saturday afternoon. At the dinner, she plans to introduce you to her family and friends. This is a way for her to show you her gratitude, but unfortunately, you cannot make it.

Student:

You:

- E. Imagine that you are in (*Latin American country of your preference*). You are a department manager of a branch of (*Company in the speaker's country: Telephone company*). Your boss just received a promotion and will become the President of the entire company. She is having a party next Saturday evening at a restaurant and is inviting other members of the company to celebrate her promotion. She invites you to celebrate this important occasion with her, but you are unable to attend.

Boss:

You:

Appendix B

Retrospective verbal report

1. How did you feel during the interaction?
2. Have you ever been in a similar situation? If so, how did you react? If no: If this situation had happened to you in (Spanish speaking country or United States), would you have answered differently?
3. How did you feel about declining the invitation?
4. In your home country, how would people typically decline this invitation? (ENG–ENG and SPN–SPN only)
5. In declining this invitation, did you express all you wanted to say?
6. Do you decline an invitation differently in Spanish and in English? (ENG–SPN only)
7. How do you think native speakers of Spanish would decline this invitation? (ENG–SPN only)
8. When someone invites you somewhere and you can't make it, do you expect that person to insist? Why?
9. In case of accepting the invitation, why did you do so?

Appendix C

Classification of Refusals

(Modified version of the Classification of Refusals in Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz 1990)

I. Direct

- A. Non-Performative 'No'
- B. Negative Willingness/Ability (e. g., 'I won't,' 'I don't think so', 'I can't')

II. Indirect

- A. Mitigated Refusal: (e. g., 'I don't think it's going to be possible because ...')
- B. Indefinite Reply (e. g., 'maybe,' 'we'll see')
- C. Excuse/Explanation (e. g., 'I have to attend my brother's wedding')
- D. Wish (e. g., 'I wish I could be there')
- E. Statement of Regret/Apology (e. g., 'I'm sorry ...')
- F. Avoidance
 - 1. Repetition of part of request (e. g., 'on Saturday?')
 - 2. Hedging (Expressing doubt or reluctance) (e. g., 'Gee, I don't know')
- G. Alternative (e. g., 'Why don't we go out next week?')
- H. Promise of Future Acceptance (e. g., 'I'll do it next time')
- I. Set Condition for Future or Past Acceptance (e. g., 'I wish you had asked me earlier', 'If I have time, I'll stop by your house')
- J. Let Interlocutor off the Hook (e. g., 'that's okay, don't worry')

III. Solidarity Politeness Strategies

- A. Explicit Acceptance (e. g., 'Okay, I'll be there')
- B. Mitigated Acceptance (e. g., 'I think I'll be able to make it')
- C. Solidarity (e. g., 'well, you know how some people have young kids, and you know how it is, sometime it's hard, but, we'll think about it. I'm gonna talk to them to see what we can work out. Manuel's house is pretty centrally located.' (SPN-SPN, M # 4)

IV. Adjuncts to Refusals

- A. Statement of Positive Opinion, Willingness, Agreement or Support (e. g., 'I'd love to do that', 'congratulations')
- B. Requesting Information about Event (e. g., 'when is it?')
- C. Statement of Discomfort (e. g., 'well, now I'm in trouble')
- D. Accepting Fault (e. g., 'It's my fault')
- E. Well-wishing (e. g., 'Good luck')
- F. Expressing Gratitude/Appreciation (e. g., 'Thank you', 'I appreciate it')

Notes

- 1. I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Andrew Cohen for his detailed

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2. Participants were living in Minneapolis, MN at the time of the data collection. They were from six different Latin American countries: Mexico, Cuba, Venezuela, Peru, Argentina, and Colombia (mean length of residence in the United States: two years and seven months). Carmen García (e-mail communication) pointed out that stylistic variation of the different cultures of these participants might influence the results (cf. García 1992, 1999).
3. More research in other languages is needed to explain the nature of the interlanguage system with respect to the level of directness/indirectness during the production of speech acts.

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