Impoliteness in Peninsular Spanish and British English: A Contrastive Perspective

The study of the impoliteness has been frequently overlooked in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics. Whereas most research using politeness theory focuses exclusively on politeness, few studies have explored impoliteness use from a contrastive perspective (House and Kádar 2021: 65). Moreover, Peninsular Spanish and British English have been seldom compared, with the notable exception of a few empirical studies with a limited scope (Kaul de Marlangeon and Alba-Juez 2012; Maíz-Arevalo 2005). Whereas the types of impoliteness strategies used by speakers in Peninsular Spanish and British English have been found to show similarities (Kaul de Marlangeon and Alba-Juez 2012: 89), the quality and frequencies of said impoliteness strategies remain to be investigated.

The present research aims to bridge this gap by considering interactions that take place within the framework of a specific activity type (Levinson 1992), that of card game interactions. The adversarial nature of these exchanges sets the stage for impoliteness to occur and allows for a straightforward comparison of the use of impoliteness in the two languages. The analysis will be based on a parallel corpus of recordings of groups of four participants playing shedding-type card game Uno. For each of the languages under consideration, 6 groups will be recorded, making 48 the total number of participants involved in the study. The corpus will also be stratified by the social variables of gender and age, which will allow me to examine how different social groups use impoliteness across the two languages. Once data collection is completed, instances of impoliteness will be identified and coded according to existing taxonomies (Culpeper 1996; Bousfield 2008). The quantitative analysis of the types and frequency of impoliteness strategies employed by speakers of Peninsular Spanish and British English will be complemented with the qualitative analysis of individual instances of impoliteness. This way, I intend to demonstrate how impoliteness is shaped by various factors in interaction, as the proponents of second and third wave approaches to the study of (im)politeness contend (Culpeper and Hardaker 2017).

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