Impoliteness in Peninsular Spanish and British English

A Contrastive Perspective

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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, p. 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, p. 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 the shedding-type card game Uno. This corpus will also be stratified by gender, allowing me to explore how males and females convey impoliteness. Once data collection is completed, instances of impoliteness will be identified and coded according to existing taxonomies of impoliteness (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 answer the following research questions: a) Do speakers of Peninsular Spanish and British English differ in their orientation towards positive and/or negative impoliteness strategies? b) What are the effects of social factors, including culture and gender, on the amount and types of impoliteness tactics used?

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