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**Request strategies: A Contrastive Study of Requests  
in English and Spanish**

**(Bakalářská práce)**

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Request Strategies: A Contrastive Study of Requests in English and Spanish.  
**(Bakalářská práce).**

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Renata Majíčková

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to compare the similarities and differences in the formulation of requests in English and Spanish. The bachelor thesis will mainly focus on the function of requests, the variety of strategies applied in certain communicative situations and, last but not least, on the relationship between requests and politeness theory. This study will compare pragmatic equivalence of request strategies between English and Spanish. Furthermore, this study may eventually help students who learn English or Spanish as their second language to choose the right strategy for communicating with a native speaker.

**Key words:** request, speech act, politeness, request strategies, English, Spanish

## **Abstrakt**

Cílem této bakalářské práce je porovnání podobností a rozdílů ve formulování žádostí v angličtině a španělštině. Tato bakalářská práce bude zaměřena převážně na funkci žádostí, různorodost strategií používaných v určitých komunikačních situacích a v neposlední řadě, na souvislost mezi žádostmi a teorií zdvořilosti. Tato studie porovná pragmatickou ekvivalenci žádostí mezi angličtinou a španělštinou. Kromě toho může tato studie pomoci studentům, kteří se učí angličtinu nebo španělštinu jako druhý jazyk, vybrat správnou strategii pro komunikaci s rodilým mluvčím.

**Klíčová slova:** žádost, mluvní akt, zdvořilost, strategie žádostí, angličtina, španělština

# OBSAH

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# 1 Introduction

For non-native speakers, it might be rather difficult to know what is considered polite behaviour in other languages as it is specific to a particular culture. In addition, for non-native speakers, it is quite crucial to know, how to act in specific situations to avoid misinterpretation or faux pas. Therefore, this is the main reason I have chosen to concern myself with cross-cultural linguistics politeness as it provides a variety of captivating subjects and an insight into the customs of different cultures. As Brown and Levinson suggested: “We believe that patterns of message construction, or ways of putting things, or simply language usage, are part of the very stuff that social relationships are made of” (Brown and Levinson 1987, 55).

I will examine which strategies people prefer for making a request. This study will be focused on the realization of requests by native English and Spanish speakers from various English-speaking and Spanish-speaking countries.

In the literary review, I will mention mainly the Politeness Theory by Brown and Levinson. Furthermore, this part will discuss Face-threatening acts (FTA) and highlight the possible strategies for making a request. According to Brown and Levinson, every person possesses a face (negative or positive face) while interacting with other people and everyone aims to preserve their faces in communication. Even if the realization might differ according to a specific culture, Brown and Levinson suggest that the theory of face knowledge is universal (Brown and Levinson 1987, 61). In this contrastive study, I will analyse the strategies of requests. A request is a speech act, that is considered to threaten the addressee's negative face want. A negative face want suggests the desire to be respected, which is threatened when a speaker wants the hearer to do some action (Birner 2013, 201).

The methodology will be based on the contrastive study and the collected data by the Discourse-Completion Test (DCT). This method consists of presenting a situation to respondents and their task is to complete the dialogue with their preferable answer according to the given context. This method, among others, was used by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain for their comparative study of requests and apologies across eight different languages (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984, 197). I will elaborate on two identical questionnaires, one for native English speakers and the second one for native Spanish speakers. The first part of the questionnaire will focus on socio-cultural background, therefore, the age, gender and nationality. In the second part, I will present eight situations with a brief description that will differ according to a social distance and social power (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 74).

In data analysis, I will illustrate the results and compare distinct request strategies and I will highlight whether English and Spanish native speakers mitigate their expressions of requests and how they might differ in these two languages.

Our ways of communicating are essential for maintaining relationships and certain positions in society. Thus, this study may help second-language learners of English and Spanish to know which strategy for request is preferable and how to formulate them.

## 2 Speech Acts

Humans are fortunate to have developed one of the most sophisticated communication systems within living creatures over thousands of years. Communication is the most essential part of our everyday life. During the day we usually talk about our experiences, feelings, and responsibilities, moreover, we also express certain needs or wants. Each of these conversational situations is known as a speech act. As Birner stated in *Introduction to Pragmatics* if a person wants to communicate something, he or she puts into practice the so-called **Theory of Speech Acts** (2013, 175).

### 2.1 Theory of Speech Acts

This theory is applicable to both spoken and written communication. The concept of the Theory of Speech Acts is fundamentally **pragmatic**, as it covers the speaker's (S) intention and the addressee's (H) interpretation. Most of the time the interpretation of the S's intention is far from being clearly recognizable, as we tend to communicate indirectly to avoid perhaps a negative response or offending the hearer. In conversation, the context of the situation must be taken into consideration so that the H could properly infer and understand the S's intention in other words, what kind of speech act the S performs by the utterance (Birner 2013, 175).

Austin distinguishes three different types of speech acts that we perform simultaneously. The first act involves uttering something with a specific meaning and reference which is known as **a locutionary act**. The second one is **an illocutionary act** which provides specific S's intention of the utterance. Therefore, any utterance can perform any possible act. Thirdly, **the perlocutionary act** represents what the S has achieved by his utterance and how it has influenced the H (1962, 108).

(1) *I'm cold.* [Birner, 2013, 186]

The locutionary act in (1) might be understood as the meaning of communicating a certain feeling, while the illocutionary act may suggest a variety of speech acts. For illustration, it can be intended as a statement of fact, a request ("close the window") or perhaps as an invitation ("cuddle with me") (Birner, 2013, 187).

### 2.2 Felicity conditions

Every speech act must follow certain conditions to be successfully fulfilled. These contextual restrictions are called **felicity conditions** (Austin, 1962). If we consider the example in (1) to be a request, then the perlocutionary act will be achieved if the felicity conditions are fulfilled. The H must be able to close the window or provide a jumper to the S. As far as **requests** are concerned, one of the felicity conditions is that the addressee must be able to comply with the request and the S must want the request to be fulfilled (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 132).



### 3 Politeness

To express speech acts directly might be rather challenging. The S uses certain expressions and verbal tools to achieve a successful speech act. To avoid misunderstanding, insults, or rejection, we perform speech acts on the basis of formal **politeness**. Brown and Levinson investigated politeness in terms of linguistics as **Politeness Theory**. They stated that formal politeness involves, for instance, conventionalized indirect speech acts, hedges, apologies for the intrusion, etc (1987, 57). Brown and Levinson aimed to identify a universal model of social principles and rules across distinct cultures. In *Some universals in language*, they examined both similarities and differences in how politeness is expressed across various cultures. Furthermore, they suggested this study would provide a useful framework for studying relationships in any society (1987, 57). Nevertheless, there are some other theories that do not find this theory or the concept of some universal model to be proper.

#### 3.1 Politeness theories

The Politeness Theory was preceded by other two fundamental theories which formed the core for the following studies on linguistic politeness. The first one is the **Conversational-Maxim View** introduced by Grice in 1975. His theory is based on the Cooperative Principle (CP). Grice suggested that S follow specific maxims and sub-maxims, that are associated with CP. These maxims are *maxim of quality*, *maxim of quantity*, *maxim of relevance* and *maxim of manner* (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 95). According to Brown and Levinson, politeness is the main source of deviation from Grice's Maxims (1987, 95).

The other important study, considering politeness as a linguistic form, is Leech's **Principle of Politeness**. This principle has elaborated the conversational maxims introduced by Grice. According to Leech, the CP is not sufficient for the relation between sense and force (1983, 79). The PP is a necessary complement to the CP because sometimes we violate a maxim in order to uphold the PP (Leech, 1983, 80-81).

In the following section, I will describe politeness in terms of Brown and Levinson's theory, which is still considered to be the most well-known and influential study. Their Politeness Theory adopts certain features from the two previous theories of politeness.

#### 3.2 Politeness by Brown and Levinson

As I have already stated above, the Politeness Theory by Brown and Levinson focuses on the identification of the universal politeness principles. In their study, they constructed a proper Model Person (MP) which possesses two crucial properties: rationality and face. With the MP they introduced various aspects of language usage (Brown and Levinson 1987, 56). Grice's maxim theory had been taken into account in their study.

##### 3.2.1 Face

The MP has the property of **face**. The notion of face was derived from Goffman's concept of face and from the concept of feeling humiliated, which is assumed as "losing face" according to the English folk term (Brown and Levinson 1987, 61). The notion of face is a crucial part

of this theory as the communicative interaction is believed to be based on maintaining the face of S and H. By face, the concept of “the public self-image”, is considered to have two related wants characterized by both **negative** and **positive face**.

While the negative face represents the want of MP to be independent, the positive face stands for the want of sharing the same goal with other members of communication interaction. In other words, positive face want is the desire to be understood or admired. Positive face want might be for non-material (love, liberty) or material things (going to the cinema) as well (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 63). The important point of a positive face is that a person wants his goals to be accepted by particular members that are associated with that goal (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 63). For illustration, teachers might want their work to be admired by students, however, not by the cleaners at schools. However, face wants are considered to be culture-specific or even group-specific (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 63).

Brown and Levinson claimed that every person is a rational agent, who seeks to achieve his goals as efficiently as possible, therefore, **rational behaviour** is another characteristic of MP and is stated as universal across languages (1987, 58).

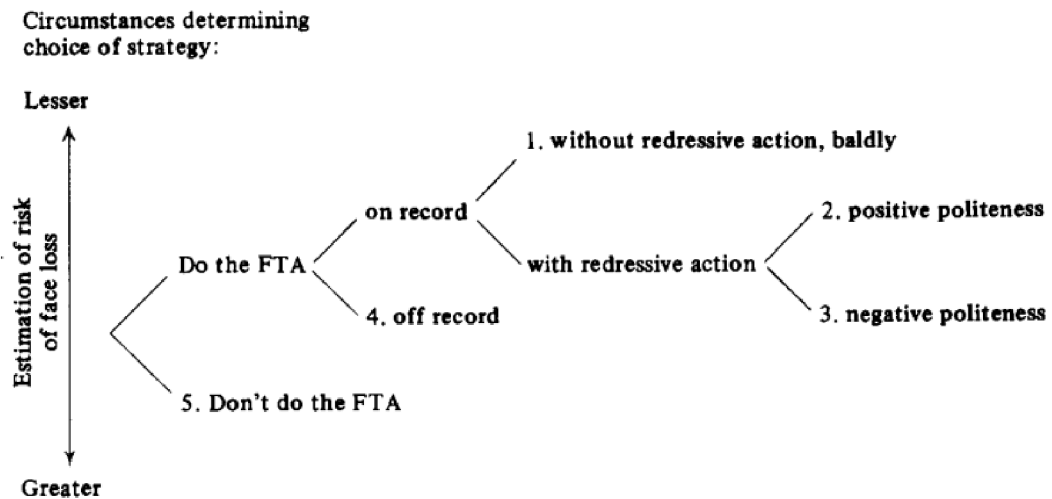
### ***3.2.2 Face Threatening Acts***

When people perform Face face-threatening acts (FTAs), they communicate with disrespect towards the H’s self-image (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 65). These acts might be performed by verbal or non-verbal communication. The main division of FTAs is between those who threaten positive and those threatening negative face wants. The FTAs which violate negative face wants are requests, orders, suggestions, compliments, promises or warnings. In all of these speech acts the H’s negative face (independence) is highly threatened by the speaker. On the other hand, the FTAs that threaten positive faces suggest that the speaker does not pay attention to the addressee’s wants. For example, criticism, insults, and self-oriented communication (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 67).

There are also FTAs which might offend S’s negative face, such as acceptance of apology, expressing gratitude, or unwilling promises. The S’s positive face can be threatened by apologies and non-control of emotional expressions (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 68). The core of being polite is managing to avoid or minimize FTAs. Brown and Levinson in their theory stated several strategies for minimizing the threat of S’s or H’s face.

### 3.2.3 FTAs strategies

All of these strategies, which I will thoroughly discuss below, are used in everyday communication across different cultures to minimize as much as possible the threatening faces of the participants in communication interactions.



Picture 1: FTA strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987, 69)

The first distinction is between doing the FTA **on record** or **off record**. When we utter something on the basis of the off record, our utterance is far from being explicit about our intentions. Therefore, the S is not committed to any specific intent because the utterance lacks explicitness. This strategy is usually performed by metaphors, irony, rhetorical questions and hints of S's intentions. In contrast, doing the FTA on record means that S communicate his intentions and goals explicitly. This strategy can perfectly save us from misunderstanding. On-record strategy is further divided into on record with or without redressive action (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 69).

Performing the act **baldly, without redressive action**, implies that we express our intentions in the most straightforward and unambiguous way possible. This strategy is useful and acceptable in the case of urgency, suggestions that are in H's interest or when S is superior in power to H (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 69). This strategy could be characterized as one that works on account of Grice's maxims, which are the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance and manner (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 94).

On the other hand, **redressive action** shows that S does not wish to suggest any possible threat towards H's face. In the light of redressive action, we distinguish negative and positive politeness according to the fact which aspect of face S stresses (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

Every strategy can convey certain advantages of S known as **the Payoffs**.

### 3.2.4 Positive Politeness

Positive politeness focuses on supporting the H's positive face. This strategy seeks to highlight the similarities between S and H and the acknowledgement of H's wants and identity. We tried to emphasize shared interests and equal social position between H and S. Positive politeness operates with 3 mechanisms: claiming common ground, the want to convey that S and the H are cooperatively involved in relevant activity, and S fulfilling H's wants (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 70, 73).

### 3.2.5 Negative Politeness

The other strategy with redressive action is Negative Politeness which unlike positive politeness focuses mainly on maintaining and satisfying H's negative face. It consists of assuring the H that his negative face is respected and not being threatened. Negative politeness involves acts of deference or formality and focuses on the H's independence. This aim is achieved by kind requests and by providing the H with options (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 70, 73).

Brown and Levinson presented that the tension in negative politeness between on record and off record strategy can be held as a compromise known as **conventionalized indirectness**. The strategy when the S utter something without contextual ambiguity, however, it differs from its literal meaning. Conventionalized indirectness partially satisfies the faces of both S and H (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 132). It is quite significant to add that negative politeness is the very strategy associated with politeness in Western cultures (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 130).

### 3.2.6 Criticism of Brown and Levinson

The Politeness Theory of Brown and Levinson has been continuously criticized over the years in several aspects. The first and main aspect that is attacked is their concept of the **“universal”** politeness. Their model is too focused on Western culture and thus has been criticized by many that it cannot be the universal model (Leech, 2014, 81).

Another key concept that in many ways did not receive an entirely positive response was their **definition of “face”** which does not correspond with Goffman's face and with the essential Chinese concept of face (Leech, 2014, 81). Despite the rather larger variety of misconceptions in this theory, it is still regarded as a key study of politeness that has led and inspired many other studies.

## 4 Request

Perhaps the most essential speech act that depends on politeness to be most successful in conversation is **a request**. Certainly, in many situations, we struggle with asking someone for a favour even within our society, which can make it even more difficult to make the right choice in a different culture and language. This comparative study therefore focuses on comparing the similarities and differences between the formulation of a request in English and Spanish. As I have already mentioned above, Brown and Levinson focused their study on

pragmatic universality, however, this is especially difficult to pursue across speech acts (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984, 196).

#### 4.1 Request features

Requests are **face-threatening acts**, the S by making a request threatens the H's negative face, as he interferes with the listener's freedom of action and expression. (Brown and Levinson, 1987) Nevertheless, requests may threaten the face of S as well. It is very likely that across all studied languages, there are socially motivated direct and indirect strategies to cost the least imposition in the speech act (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984, 201). The S can employ indirect strategies to express his specific requirements. Nonetheless, there are many verbal devices that should help to avoid threatening the H's negative face if the S chooses to express the request directly (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984, 201).

To consider illocutionary acts, requests belong to the group of **directives**. Searle explained directives as “an attempt by the speaker to get the hearer to do something” (1979, 13). Whether it is a kind request or an order, S always wants the H to do the particular **future oriented** action. Some studies describe a clear distinction between request and command, while others, such as Searle and Leech's study, argue that there is no clear boundary between command and request across cultures and languages (Leech, 2014, 135). Leech suggests that there is a **continuous scale of optionality** between command and request (2014, 135). Moreover, certain request strategies may verge on suggestions, instructions or invitations (Leech, 2014, 136).

The form of a request has two parts. The first is the core or **head act** and the second part is **the peripheral elements** also called **the supportive move**. Blum-Kulka et. al. defined the terminology of the *head act* and *supportive move* in 1989. The head act of a request can be utter on its own because it possesses the function of requesting. The peripheral elements such as hedges, honorifics, and adverbs usually accompany the head act of a request. These elements usually have a significant role as they can mitigate or aggravate the threat to the negative face of H (Márquez, 2000, 36). For making a request speakers can use imperatives, interrogatives, negative interrogatives and declaratives in both English and Spanish (Márquez, 2000, 36). The formulation strategies of the request I will discuss below.

#### 4.2 Request Face and Strategy

Speakers can choose from a variety of strategies for making a request, however, not all are convenient for this act to be successful. It can cause the want of the S to maintain a self-public image to be threatened. The realization of requests can be organized into “a cross-linguistically valid scale of directness” (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984, 201). The first level corresponds to the most direct and **explicit strategy** which operates with imperatives to make a request. The speaker chose to express his request baldly without redress. The second level stands for **the conventional indirectness** that I mentioned earlier in this paper. It is a combination of on record and off-record strategy. However, many indirect requests are completely conventionalized in English, therefore, they are part of **on record strategy** (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 70). **The nonconventional indirect** level is the last one. The last

strategy for making a request uses indirect hints and contextual clues. In other words, S uses the **off-record** FTA strategy (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984, 201).

- (2) a. Close the window!
- b. Could you close the window?
- c. It is rather cold in here, isn't it?

In (2a.) I have illustrated the direct strategy for making a request with imperative. Such a strategy is suitable if S want to convey an urgent message, or if the S is superior to the H, or if the danger to H's face is very little (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 69). Otherwise, imperatives are the least polite utterances (Leech, 1983, 119). The second example in (2b.) shows how you can express request indirectly. In the last sentence in (2) I have demonstrated how S can make a request on the nonconventional indirect level. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain in their work divided this three-level scale into nine different strategy types that are universal to any given language (1984, 201). The third example in (2) is considered to be the politest strategy (Leech, 2014, 143). The non-conventional strategy is the least likely strategy to occur in English conversation as shown in Ilka Flöck's research (2016, 127).

Requests can be further categorized by *request perspective* as not every request strategy is not **H oriented**. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain listed also **S oriented** requests, both **S and H oriented** requests and lastly **impersonal** requests (1984, 203). In Márquez Reiter's research in 2000 was a significant difference between Spanish and British English request perspectives. Spanish speakers used H oriented perspective nearly in all cases, whereas British English speakers used also S oriented requests quite often (Márquez Reiter, 2000, 107). Different perspectives can occur across Anglo-speaking societies as well. American speakers tend to use S oriented requests less than British speakers as shown in Ilka Flöck's research (2016, 124).

#### **4.2.1 The degree of politeness**

There are many sociological factors across different societies determining the choice of the degree of politeness. Brown and Levinson in 1987 demonstrated three most important factors: **the social distance (D)** of S and H, **the relative "power" (P)** of S and H and lastly **the absolute ranking (R)** of impositions in the particular culture. The factor D is stated as a symmetric social dimension of similarity or difference between S and H in a particular speech act. D takes into account the scale between deference and solidarity according to the social distance and closeness between the participants in a conversation. However, each culture or society has a different social distance scale. The social distance scale might include a range of other factors such as frequency of contact, length of acquaintance or similar mindset (Leech, 2014, 139). The second factor P is regarded as an asymmetric social dimension of relative power. This factor has two sources in general which overlap in measuring P. The first is material control and the second one is metaphysical control (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 77). The term power includes other factors such as age, gender and social status of S and H. For example, for Eastern cultures age is a vital index of superiority (Leech, 2014, 106). For illustration, Sara Mills mentioned that the stereotypical view on politeness is that it is women's concern, more precisely white and middle-class women in Western culture. Mills strongly disapproves of this stereotypical view and claims that the overall context of any

interaction should be taken into account (Mills, 2004, 176). The third factor R shows the costs and benefits of the speech act and the consideration of S's and H's negative and positive face (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 77).

Geoffrey Leech calls the factors P, D and R as vertical, horizontal distance and weightiness of the transaction. He also refers to Brown's and Levinson's three main factors as trivalent politeness (2014, 107). Leech added two other factors: the difference between in-group and out-group relations and the strength of the obligation S has towards H or vice versa to express a speech act. For example, if the H has no significant obligation to perform the request, a certain degree of politeness should be expressed (Leech, 2014, 106). The boundary between in-group and out-group relations can vary across cultures as shown in Fukushima's research about request strategies in British English and Japanese (1996, 678).

### 4.3 Requests in English

Mentioning the three-level strategies for making a request, it is clear that we can use declarative, interrogative and imperative utterances for requests. In Fukushima's research British speakers tend to use interrogatives most frequently for requests. (1996, 679) The same finding was established by the Ilka Flöck research where interrogative sentence type was preferred by both American and British speakers (2016, 124). The **explicit or direct** (bold-on-record) **strategy** can be applied as both (3) imperatives and (4) performatives. This strategy does not contain any peripheral elements. The performative request starts with a verb like *ask* or *beg*. While imperatives may seem like the least polite strategy, they can suggest a rather polite request, if the goal benefits H (Leech, 2014, 147).

- (3) Show me your sketches.
- (4) I beg you to show me your sketches.

In English, it is not usual to use imperatives for requests even if the S adds *please*. It would still be considered tactless in English-speaking countries. On the other hand, it depends on the context and the situation, because direct imperative for requests is fully acceptable when the action is regular and routine (Leech, 2014, 147). As a sample, I can refer to a situation at the airport where the H would not mind a simple "*Passport, please.*" The research concerning the present-day English usage of *please* showed that *please* is used in British requests twice as many as in American requests (Murphy and De Felice, 2023, 19). In British English the use of *please* does not suggest the request to be more polite, however, without *please* the request would be considered as impolite. On the other hand, the presence of *please* in American English requests tends to interpret the request as more polite (Murphy and De Felice, 2023, 22). **Honorifics** could be added as another indicator of politeness besides *please*. The utterance in (4) is also rare in everyday conversation in English as it is quite formal.

The second and most common request strategy in English is the **conventionally indirect** (on-record) strategy. In the Fukushima research in 1996 all British participants chose conventional indirect request strategy in both investigated situations. (676) S can use interrogatives and declaratives for making an indirect request. English has many modal auxiliaries that might be used and each of them has a distinct degree of politeness and distinct

level on the scale of modality. The modal auxiliaries *will* and *must* are the most face-threatening. *Would* is considered to be more polite than *will* as it sets the action as an unreal event. However, the most usual indirect requests in English are those that ask for ability and possibility: *can* and more indirect *could*. Many studies have shown that English speakers prefer to choose **negative politeness** more likely than speakers of other languages (Leech, 2014,155). In research by Ilka Flöck both American and British speakers used the most the conditions of ability for making a request. However, there was a slight difference, American speakers used the ability conditions less than British speakers. On the other hand, American speakers applied requests asking for willingness more likely than British speakers (2016, 123). Nevertheless, the negative counterpart *Can't* is assumed to be less polite, however, negative questions with *Won't you?* are regarded as an offer and therefore they are not less polite (Leech, 2014, 156). A research study in 1996 revealed that native speakers of English use more politeness markers than non-native speakers, who are rather direct in formulating requests. (Iraqi, 1996, 58) The most common strategy in this study was the preparatory strategy (*can I?, could I?*) both for native and non-native English speakers (Iraqi, 1996, 56).

The third strategy that I mentioned in 3.2 is **off-record indirect requests** that can be expressed by questions or statements just as the on-record strategy mentioned earlier. In this strategy, S does not refer to his intention at all. To put it in other words, S does not mention the action he wants the H to do. For both questions (5) and statements (6), various hints are used for off-record (Leech, 2014, 158).

(5) Are you going to the train station? [Leech, 2014, 159]

(6) I'm sorry, I can't see the screen. [Leech, 2014, 158]

In (5) the S might want to ask the H to take him to the train station. The example in (6) could be a hint for H to move. Yet even this strategy is not considered to be entirely polite or more polite than the on-record strategy (Leech, 2014, 159).

#### 4.3.1 Pragmatic modifiers

Pragmatic modifiers are another important element in English that can variously modify requests. Since Leech was concerned with the pragmatic aspects of modifiers and wanted to distinguish them from their grammatical functions, he labelled them as pragmatic modifiers (Leech, 2014, 159). He describes their function as: “increase the complexity of the requests, and also (in most cases) its optionality factor.” (2014, 160). As I have mentioned above, a request might consist of optional elements which are also modifiers. In English, there are several internal modifiers that can be expressed both lexically and syntactically. Pragmatic modifiers are supposed to reduce the threat of H's negative face. The lexical ones include **modal adverbs** (*maybe, perhaps*), **diminishers** (*a bit, a little, just*). Not only adverbs but also certain verbs, adjectives or nouns can suggest the mitigation of a threat. The next lexical modifier is the word *please* which is discussed above.

There are also some **request openings** that soften the obligation and do not require a response of H: *I wonder if, Do you think, I'd appreciate it if* (Leech, 2014, 162). It was noted that the opening: *It would be ADJECTIVE if*, is pretty common in English (Leech, 2014, 164). Other internal modifiers are **hedged performative openings** like *May I ask, Do you*



*mind*. Other indicators that may mitigate H's obligation include expressions like *happen to* and *by any chance*. To mention some syntactical indicators, *progressive aspect* (*I was wondering*), *past tense* which indicates distance feature and *tag questions* have the ability to tone down the effect of a request (Leech, 2014). Jasone Cenoz Iragui concluded in his research that non-native speakers of English expressed various syntactic indicators while native speakers used mostly only interrogatives (1996, 56).

As I have mentioned the term internal modifiers, the other group is labelled as external modifiers. They do not create a part of the head act of request as well and sometimes might express the request without the head act. External modifiers include **apologies, thanks** and **vocatives** such as first name of H, honorifics, family and familiar vocatives (Leech, 2014, 171-173). Vocatives are certainly very important for the D and P factors mentioned in 3.2.1.

Lastly, requests in English can be modified by supporting moves. **Grounders** and **preparators** are the most utilised supporting moves. S by uttering any kind of grounder can justify his request as in (7) and preparators as in (8) introduce H to request so that S can ensure H's cooperation (Blem-Kulka, 1984, 205).

(7) Judith, **I missed class yesterday**. Could I borrow your notes? [Blum-Kulka, et.al, 1989]

(8) I'd like to ask you something... [Blum-Kulka, et.al., 1989]

The fact that grounders are one of the most frequent supporting moves is notable in Fukushima research, where the majority of British speakers used grounders as supportive mitigating moves for requests (1996, 684).

#### 4.4 Requests in Spanish

According to Walters, the Spanish formulation of requests has indeed immense similarity with the English one. Both languages use interrogatives and declaratives for making a request. Spanish applies modals as well as English, however, Spanish lacks the rich variety of modals that English possesses. Therefore, the only possible counterpart for English *can, could, will, would* and *may* is a Spanish verb **poder**. On the other side, Spanish has a wider variation with pronouns than English *thanks* to the richer inflectional morphological structure of the verb. A highly notable difference is that Spanish question and declarative intonations are more alike than English intonations. Following these conclusions, Walters observed that Spanish requests are less marked and less varied than English requests (1979, 282).

In Spanish, interrogative sentences are much more common formulation of the request as well as in English (Álvarez, 2005, 68). Spanish might use the direct strategy (9), however, the indirect strategy is much more frequent (10). Cross-cultural research of requests in British English and Spanish in Uruguay showed that in all studied situations both English and Spanish speakers preferred the conventional indirect strategy for requests and also the fact that Spanish speakers in Uruguay use non-conventional indirect strategy a lot less than English speakers (Márquez Reiter, 2000, 101, 108). Indirect requests in Spanish are formed by either **the present tense** or **the conditional** of verbs such as: *poder* (can), *querer* (want), *importer* (mind) (Álvarez, 2005, 69).

(9) ¿Me **das** el paraguas? [Álvarez, 2005, 69]

Me <sub>dativ</sub> **give** present indicative **you** Tform the umbrella ?

Can you give me the umbrella?

(10) ¿**Podrías** pasarme ese paraguas?

**Can** conditional simple **you** Tform PASS infinitive me <sub>dativ</sub> that umbrella?

Could you pass me that umbrella?

Similar to English **performative openings**, Spanish has also certain opening forms such as: *tener la bondad* (have the kindness), *hacer el favor* (do a favor), *por favor* (please), *ser tan amable de* (be so kind to). As in English, in Spanish **imperative** is not considered to be impolite in certain situations. For illustration, *Póngame 250 gramos de angula* (Give <sub>imperative, Vform</sub> me <sub>dativ</sub> 250 grams of eel) represents an action that is routine between the customer and salesman (Álvarez, 2005, 71). In Spanish, the imperative has much greater and more frequent use than in English, for example for hopes or wishes (Márquez Reiter, 2000, 37). In English, the imperative does not take any inflection, however, in Spanish the imperative can also make a difference between T/V forms (Márquez Reiter, 2000, 37). Álvarez also mentions that intonation is essential for making a request. Intonation can be accompanied by nonverbal gestures that can mitigate the threat of H's negative face (2005, 71). Another research examined the facial and body cues of Catalan speakers. The results of the study showed that speakers express more facial and body cues in non-polite interaction. The authors also noted that earlier the emphasis had been on exploring only the verbal expression of politeness. However, more recent studies have also focused on the intonation and nonverbal expressions of politeness (Iris Hübscher, Cristina Sánchez-Conde, Joan Borràs-Comes, Laura Vincze and Pilar Prieto, 2020). The most common forms that mitigate the request's threat in Spanish are **conditional** and **imperfecto de cortesía** (Álvarez, 2005, 71). *Imperfecto de cortesía* is a verb form in the past tense in indicative or in subjunctive mood. Forms *conditional* and *imperfecto de cortesía* allow the requested fact to be presented only as a possibility, and not as an inevitable and obligatory reality for the H and the past tense forms allow the S to distance himself temporally from the moment of speech (Álvarez, 2005, 71).

In contrast to English which expresses the sociological factors of politeness P and D also with honorifics such as *sir* or *madam*, Spanish uses the pronouns **tú**, **vosotros/vosotras**, **usted**, **ustedes**. The pronouns *tú* and *vosotros* denote equality and certain closeness between S and H, therefore they are used between friends, family, or colleagues at work (Álvarez, 2005 28). Their counterparts *usted* and *ustedes* are used to express greater respect for H or H's higher social status (Álvarez, 2005, 30). However, recently among the younger generation, the pronouns *tú* and *vosotros* are used in situations where the pronouns *usted* and *ustedes* were traditionally used such as teacher/student or employer/job candidate relations (Álvarez, 2005, 29). The interesting point is that the pronoun *vosotros/vosotras* has been completely replaced in Latin America by the pronoun *ustedes* (Álvarez, 2005, 32).

## 5 Research questions

The aim of this study is to investigate similarities and differences in patterns in making requests in English and Spanish. The cross-cultural study in pragmatics is a rather complex field and it would be challenging to focus on all the possible factors that can be involved in speech acts. As I have already mentioned, the most preferred strategy for making requests in both English and Spanish is *on-record: negative politeness*, which has been noted in various studies. Nonetheless, I wanted to analyse whether this strategy is preferred in situations with high social distance as well as in situations with a low social distance even today among English and Spanish native speakers. As society and communication patterns change rather swiftly among generations. Since I have chosen 4 situations with high social distance and other 4 situations operating on social closeness, my key and first research question centres on the following:

### **1. What are the preferred strategies for making requests in English and Spanish in situations with different social distance?**

The next factors that I have illustrated in 4.3.1 are mostly essential in maintaining the negative and positive face of both S and H. The S chooses from a variety of direct and indirect ways to imply a request in every language. Across all languages, speakers tend to minimize the imposition even when they choose a direct strategy. Such internal and external modifications are the concern of my second research question (Blum-Kulka and Olsthain, 1984, 201).

### **2. What methods of mitigating FTA do speakers of English and Spanish use in requests?**

I have adopted the terms “head act” and “supportive move” from Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989) to analyse data in my research. The head acts’ strategies will be analysed on the three major levels of directness: direct (bald-on-record), conventionally indirect (on-record: negative and positive politeness) and non-conventionally indirect (off-record) (Blum-Kulka and Olsthain, 1984, 201). For analysing the head act strategy I have used the classification from Márquez Reiter's study, which presented how the nine different head act strategies on the level of directness can be divided into three major strategies described above (2000, 88-91). Supportive moves do not change the proposition of requests but only mitigate or aggravate their force (Marquez Reiter, 2000, 83). The external and internal modifiers will be analysed according to Leech’s classification discussed in 4.3.1 (2014). In tables, I will illustrate only the modifiers that appeared more frequently in responses.

My last research question is connected to the two previous research questions:

### **3. Are there any differences between the request strategies of Spanish and English speakers in socially distant and socially close situations?**

## 6 Methodology

In my cross-cultural research study, I focus on the differences and similarities between making requests in English and Spanish. I have decided to use the **Discourse completion test (DCT)** method in my research. DCT was used by Blum-Kulka and Olsthain in their cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns in 1984. This method is based on presenting to respondents the incomplete situations with a different setting, the social distance and their status in society. Therefore, this test aims at those three main factors in investigating speech act patterns that are discussed in 4.2.1. The respondents' task is to complete the dialogue forming a particular speech act, which is examined and analysed afterwards.

Nevertheless, DCT is not the only method that is commonly used in cross-cultural research studies. For illustration, another one is the **role play** method used in the study by Márquez Reiter in 2000 (66). This method can incorporate countless other factors that the written method cannot express such as intonation or body language. Compared to a written method such as DCT, role play is more spontaneous because participants do not spend a long time thinking about their answers, however, role play can take much more time analysing data than the DCT method (Márquez Reiter, 2000, 73).

Even though DCT might have the disadvantage of being less spontaneous, it is the method that is most widely used in cross-cultural research in pragmatics for various languages (Blum-Kulka and Olsthain, 1984; Fukushima, 1996; Cenoz Iragui, 1996; Chejnová, 2013).

### 6.1 Questionnaire

For my research, I have created two identical questionnaires for both English and Spanish. At the beginning of the questionnaire, I introduced the subject and the aim of the research and explained how to answer the provided situations. Respondents were presented with instructions and asked to respond in the first person singular as they would respond in the situation. The questionnaire was divided into three parts.

Even though these were not major research factors, in the first part, the respondents had to answer three social demographic questions: **age**, **gender** and **nationality**. This helped to have an overview of what age group most frequently responded to and where the native speaker came from. In total, there were **45** native English speakers and **44** native Spanish speakers. Women dominated both surveys, with 31 English speakers and 29 Spanish speakers and five respondents chose not to indicate their gender.

Respondents from various English-speaking and Spanish-speaking countries took part in the research. The majority of native English speakers were from the **United Kingdom (16)** and **the United States (16)** with other respondents from Canada, New Zealand, Ireland, Zambia and South Africa. Most Spanish-speaking respondents were from **the Kingdom of Spain (14)**, **Colombia (11)** and **Cuba (6)**. Other Spanish-speaking countries were Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Peru, Honduras, Bolivia and Argentina.

For both questionnaires, **the age category 18 to 30 years** old was the most prevalent, and the next largest age category was 30 to 40 years old. In the introductory section, I indicated an estimated time of 5 to 10 minutes that the respondent would spend completing

the questionnaire. However, for both questionnaires, an absolute majority spent **10 to 30 minutes** completing the questionnaire.

The second and third parts of the questionnaire consisted of **8 different situations** that varied on the basis of **social distance and closeness (D)** and the first four situation varied also in relative power (P). In the second part of the questionnaire, there were 4 different situations where the social distance between the S and H was higher as the participants were supposed to make a request to someone, they would not be familiar with at all (situations 1 and 3) or someone they are not that close to (situations 2 and 4). The factor P also varies in these situations. Only the first situation was inspired by the study of Blum-Kulka and Olsthain (1984). The second was inspired by the Hübscher et al. study, where they used socially distant situations. For example, when the S ask for favor someone who is socially higher as in this situation (2022). The third situation was added to investigate how native speakers make requests in daily routine requests such as the example in 4.3 (Leech, 2014). Since the third situation was not inspired by any study, I stated the P as equal, since in such situations the “power” may vary among societies. The fourth situation was inspired by Márquez Reiter study from 2000.

The third part of the questionnaire focused on 4 different situations where the social distance was not high (D) and with equal social status (P). Therefore, participants were presented with 4 situations with whom they have a very close relationship. Requests can be divided into **requests for information** and **requests for action** that contain a higher degree of imposition (Fukushima, 1996, 672). In my research, I have focused on requests for action (situations 2-8) with the first situation being a request for information. The fifth situation was inspired by the Hübscher et al. study from 2022. The sixth situation and seventh situations were inspired by Ilka Flöck study in 2016. The last situation was inspired by Márquez Reiter study from 2000. The questionnaire for native Spanish speakers was reviewed by doc. Mgr. Enrique Gutiérrez Rubio, Ph.D.

**Table 1:** Situations in the questionnaire

Situation	Social status	Social distance
1. English: You are calling for information on a job that has been advertised on the internet. How do you ask for information?  1. Spanish: Llamas para pedir información sobre un puesto de trabajo anunciado en Internet. ¿Cómo se pide la información?	equal	distant
2. English: You work for a company. Last week your boss asked you to create a PowerPoint presentation for a meeting which is taking place on Wednesday next week. The deadline is tonight. How do you ask your boss for an extension of the deadline?  2. Spanish: Trabajas en una empresa. La semana pasada tu jefe te pidió que prepararas una presentación en PowerPoint para la reunión que tendrá lugar el miércoles de la semana	low < high	medium

que viene. El plazo vence esta noche. ¿Cómo le pides a tu jefe una prórroga del plazo?		
3. English: You work as a cashier in a supermarket, and you need to verify the age of the current customer, who seems to be younger than you. How do you ask them to show you the ID?  3.Spanish: Trabajas de cajero en un supermercado y tienes que verificar la edad del cliente actual, que parece ser más joven que tú. ¿Cómo le pides que te enseñe el DNI?	equal	distant
4. English: You have been an employee of a company for some time. One of your duties is to answer the telephone. You go to the desk of a new trainee and ask them to answer the telephone while you pop out for a few minutes to get some things. What do you say to them?  4. Spanish: Trabajas desde hace tiempo en una empresa. Una de tus funciones es atender el teléfono. Te vas a la mesa de un nuevo becario y le pides que atienda el teléfono mientras tú sales unos minutos a recoger unas cosas. ¿Qué le dices?	equal	medium
5. English: You were ill last week and missed classes at school. What do you say to get your close friend to lend you their notes?  5.Spanish: La semana pasada estuviste enfermo y faltaste a clase. ¿Qué le dices a un amigo íntimo para que te preste sus apuntes?	equal	close
6. English: It's your friend's birthday party tonight. Unfortunately, you don't have a car and don't know how to get there. You are thinking of borrowing your other friend Rosie's car, who recently bought one. How do you ask her?  6.Spanish: Esta noche es la fiesta de cumpleaños de un amigo tuyo. Por desgracia, no tienes coche y no sabes cómo llegar. Estás pensando en tomar prestado el coche de tu otra amiga Rosie, que recientemente compró uno. ¿Cómo se lo preguntas?	equal	close
7. English: You share a flat with your friend. He is going to the supermarket, and you want some fruit, but you can't go with him. You ask him to bring you some.  7.Spanish: Compartes piso con un amigo. Él va al supermercado y tú quieres fruta, pero no puedes ir con él. Le pides que te la traiga.	equal	close
8. English: You are driving with your friend, who should be navigating you with a map, however, now you are lost. You suddenly see a pedestrian and you ask your friend to ask the pedestrian for a direction. What do you say to your friend?	equal	close

8.Spanish: Estás conduciendo con un amigo de copiloto. Él debería guiarte con un mapa, sin embargo, ahora estáis perdidos. De repente ves a un peatón y le pides a tu amigo que le pregunte por una dirección. ¿Qué le dices a tu amigo?		
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## 7 Data analysis

### 7.1 Situation 1: English responses

The participants in this situation are socially distant and equal on the basis of social status. There were 45 respondents of which **40** used **on-record negative politeness** as a head act strategy and only **2** respondents used the **bald-on record strategy**. Three respondents did not follow the required format of filling in the first-person singular for this situation. As I have mentioned earlier, there are many auxiliary verbs that can be used as internal modifications of requests. In this first situation, the following auxiliary verbs were used: *can*, *could*, *may* and *would*. The verbs *can* and *would* were the most frequent, used 10 times each in the negative politeness strategies. The auxiliary *could* was used by six participants and *may* was used solely two times. Another widely used downgrader is the *interrogative* that was used by 21 respondents. There was also added *please* as an internal modification by 14 participants in this situation. The most frequent supporting move was an external modification *grounder* when 20 participants explained why they were calling.

**Table 2:** Situation 1: English responses

Strategy type of the head act	Number of participants
On-record: negative politeness	40
Bald-on-record	2
Off-record	0
Internal modifiers	
Auxiliary verb: <i>can</i>	10
Auxiliary verb: <i>would</i>	10
Auxiliary verb: <i>could</i>	6
Auxiliary verb: <i>may</i>	2
<i>please</i>	14
Syntactic downgrader: interrogative	21
External modifiers	
Grounder	20

Most of these requests as in (11) were formulated with the conventionally indirect strategy *negative politeness* with the auxiliaries *can* and *would* by interrogative sentences that mostly were preceded or followed by external modifier *grounder*.

(11) #23: *Hello, I'm calling with regards to the job I found on the internet. Can you please provide me with more information or contact for someone I could speak with about this position?*

However, twenty-one participants chose a declarative sentence to formulate their requests. Participant #30 in (12) used the negative politeness strategy and in (13) the direct bald-on-record strategy. The two respondents chose the modifier *please* when forming a request directly.

(12) #30: *Good day, I hope you are well. I saw your listing on (website) and I would please like to know more.*

(13) #34: *Please send me information regarding the job advertised on the internet.*

## 7.2 Situation 2: English responses

This situation creates a high social distance and variation on the social status scale between participants. This situation implies the interaction between the employee and employer with the respondent being in the role of employee and therefore with lower social status in this particular situation. In this situation, the prevailing majority (38 respondents) of respondents tend to use indirect strategy and 3 respondents used direct bald on-record strategy. Three respondents did not respond to this situation. The responses contained more modifiers than in the previous situation. In situation two, the auxiliary verb *would* was used by 15 participants. Furthermore, the other auxiliaries were also presented but with less frequency. The impersonal indirect structure “*Would it be possible...?*” was used by 14 participants. The other widely used modifiers were apologies, the modifier *please*, thanks, honorifics and grounder. Grounders were much longer than in the first situation.

**Table 3:** Situation 2: English responses

Strategy type of the head act	Number of participants
On-record: negative politeness	38
Bald-on-record	3
Off-record	1
Internal modifiers	
Auxiliary verb: <i>can</i>	6
Auxiliary verb: <i>would</i>	15
Auxiliary verb: <i>could</i>	5
Auxiliary verb: <i>may</i>	6
<i>please</i>	14
Syntactic downgrader: interrogative	35
External modifiers	
Grounder	20



Apology	7
Thanks	10
Preparator	2
Honorifics	10

The example (14) shows the indirect strategy with many external modifiers (honorifics, apology, grounder, thanks) and the example in (15) presents the widely used impersonal indirect strategy.

(14) #16: *Good evening Mr.X, I am very sorry I have not finished my presentation yet due to problems with my computer. Would you please, extent the time of the deadline? I am working on the presentation right now and it will have been finished by Thursday. Thank you for your understanding.*

(15) #36: *Hi Ron, this is Chuck. Would it be possible for me to get an extension on the PowerPoint presentation? I could use an extra day to insure it is up to the high standards that you expect.*

Participants that used as the head act the direct strategy used other modifiers to mitigate the potential threat. For illustration, participant #20 used grounder as an external modifier and progressive aspect as an internal modifier. Another participant #17 used grounder as well and added *thanks*.

(16) #20: *H John, I may not be able to do a perfect job in less than 12 hours, therefore I'm asking for 1 more day for tuning and perfecting the slides.*

### 7.3 Situation 3: English responses

This situation is focused also on the request for action with social distance and varied social status as it is the interaction between a customer and an employee (a salesperson). **The indirect strategy of negative politeness** was the most frequent strategy used by 36 respondents. The direct strategy was used only by 9 participants who used it with the modifier *please* or *grounder*. Unlike the first two situations, in this situation, the grounder was used rather rarely (7 respondents). For the majority (35 respondents) the modifier *please* was used. *Thanks* appeared only three times.

**Table 4:** Situation 3: English responses

Strategy type of the head act	Number of participants
On-record: negative politeness	36
Bald-on-record	9
Off-record	0
Internal modifiers	

Auxiliary verb: <i>can</i>	11
Auxiliary verb: <i>would</i>	1
Auxiliary verb: <i>could</i>	10
Auxiliary verb: <i>may</i>	11
<i>please</i>	35
Syntactic downgrader: interrogative	35
External modifiers	
Grounder	7
Apology	1
Thanks	3

The indirect strategy negative politeness examples are shown in (17) and (18), bald on-record is illustrated in (19) with the modifier *please* and in (20) with the modifier *apology*.

(17) #28: *Please could I see some ID?*

(18) #34: *May I please see your identification?*

(19) #8: *Please, show me your ID.*

(20) #9: *I'm sorry but I will have to ask for your ID.*

#### 7.4 Situation 4: English responses

The two participants in this interaction were not familiar with each other for a long time, so they were socially distant from each other. This situation was not an exception as the English speakers formed their requests with **the indirect negative politeness strategy** (39 participants). Five participants used a direct bald-on-record strategy. The participant #14 did not answer in the correct format. The majority of internal modifiers were demonstrated by auxiliaries *could* and *would*. The modifier *please* was used by 22 respondents. In comparison to previous situations, **diminishers** (*just, a bit, a few, a while*) were common in this situation.

**Table 5:** Situation 4: English responses

Strategy type of the head act	Number of participants
On-record: negative politeness	39
Bald-on-record	5
Off-record	0
Internal modifiers	
Auxiliary verb: <i>can</i>	3
Auxiliary verb: <i>would</i>	17
Auxiliary verb: <i>could</i>	14
Auxiliary verb: <i>may</i>	1
Auxiliary verb: <i>will</i>	2
<i>please</i>	22
Syntactic downgrader: interrogative	27

Progressive aspect	7
diminishers	19
External modifiers	
Grounder	18
Apology	2
Thanks	7

The examples in (21) and (22) show the indirect strategy and the other samples in (23) and (24) show the less frequent direct strategy of head acts.

(21) #40 *Could you cover the phone for a while?*

(22) #9 *Would you mind manning the phones for me for few minutes.*

(23) #30 *I need to go for a little while, please watch my station for me. Thank you.*

(24) #29 *Pick up the phone when it rings. I'll be right back.*

## 7.5 Situation 5: English responses

For situations 5 to 8 the social distance is low and social status equal as those 4 situations are interactions between close friends. In spite of the fact that the situation operates on social closeness, English speakers still preferred the conventionally indirect strategy and only 2 participants chose the direct strategy for the head act. The most frequently used internal modifier was the auxiliary verb *could* and **grounder** was once again the most used external modifier. The external modifier vocative (*hey friend, hey bro*) appeared as well to illustrate the closeness between the participants.

**Table 6:** Situation 5: English responses

Strategy type of the head act	Number of participants
On-record: negative politeness	43
Bald on-record	2
Off-record	0
Internal modifiers	
Auxiliary verb: <i>can</i>	8
Auxiliary verb: <i>would</i>	9
Auxiliary verb: <i>could</i>	17
Auxiliary verb: <i>may</i>	5
<i>please</i>	19
Syntactic downgrader: interrogative	34
External modifiers	
Grounder	22
Apology	2

Thanks	5
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Negative politeness examples are in (25) and (26) and direct strategy is shown in the samples (27) and (28).

(25) #2: *May I borrow your notes?*

(26) #11: *Hi Sarah! I missed class last week. I was super ill. May I please borrow your notes?*

(27) #29: *Please let me copy your notes. I was ill last week you know.*

(28) #26: *Do you have last weeks notes? I need to copy them.*

## 7.6 Situation 6: English responses

This situation is another interaction between two familiar and close participants with equal social status. Two participants considered this request and its imposition so high that they answered that they would not ask and rather looked for another option. The rest of the participants would use the indirect strategy. Since in the situation the name of the friend was introduced, the majority of participants used as external modifier *vocative*. Consultative devices such as *would you mind*, *do you think*, *is there any chance* were common in this situation as well.

**Table 7:** Situation 6: English responses

Strategy type of the head act	Number of participants
On-record: negative politeness	42
Bald on-record	0
Off-record	1
Internal modifiers	
Auxiliary verb: <i>can</i>	6
Auxiliary verb: <i>would</i>	15
Auxiliary verb: <i>could</i>	14
Auxiliary verb: <i>may</i>	3
<i>please</i>	12
Syntactic downgrader: interrogative	34
If-clause	10
External modifiers	
Grounder	18
Consultive devices	20
Apology	1
Thanks	1

In this situation, the head act strategy was accompanied by a combination of many different modifiers. For example, respondent #26 used grounder as an external modifier and *would* and

progressive aspect as internal modifiers. In (29) and (30) the negative politeness strategy is presented. The use of an internal modifier if-clause is in (31).

(29) #26: *Hey I have this party to go to tonight for (friend's name) birthday. I can't miss it, and I don't have a ride. Would you be ok with me borrowing your car? I'd be very careful with it.*

(30) #1: *I know it is a big ask, but my friend is having a birthday party tonight. Would I be able to use your car to get there?*

(31) #28: *Would you mind if I borrow your car?*

## 7.7 Situation 7: English responses

Participants in this situation were equal on the social scale of status and the social distance was low. As with the previous situations between friends, the negative politeness strategy dominated in this situation as well. Some frequent modifiers included **grounder**, *please*, **thanks** and **progressive aspect**.

**Table 8:** Situation 7: English responses

Strategy type of the head act	Number of participants
On-record: negative politeness	42
Bald on-record	3
Off-record	0
Internal modifiers	
Auxiliary verb: <i>can</i>	11
Auxiliary verb: <i>would</i>	13
Auxiliary verb: <i>could</i>	13
Auxiliary verb: <i>may</i>	2
Auxiliary verb: <i>will</i>	2
<i>please</i>	19
Syntactic downgrader: interrogative	42
Progressive aspect	7
External modifiers	
Grounders	8
Thanks	8

(32) #40: *Can you bring some fruit?*

(33) #29: *Please, bring me some apples.*

Respondent #40 used the negative politeness strategy without any external modifiers. Respondent #29 formulated his request with the bald-on-record strategy, however, he also added a modifier *please*.

## 7.8 Situation 8: English responses

The last situation operates on social closeness between participants in the conversation and on equal social status. Again, speakers chose mostly negative politeness strategy, however, positive politeness and bald on-record strategy were also represented among the respondents. The only modifier that participants used was *please*.

**Table 9:** Situation 8: English responses

Strategy type of the head act	Number of participants
On-record: negative politeness	30
Bald on-record	6
On-record: positive politeness	7
Off-record	1
Internal modifiers	
Auxiliary verb: <i>can</i>	19
Auxiliary verb: <i>would</i>	3
Auxiliary verb: <i>could</i>	8
Auxiliary verb: <i>may</i>	0
Auxiliary verb: <i>will</i>	1
<i>please</i>	10
Syntactic downgrader: interrogative	42
External modifiers	
Thanks	1

(34): #35: *Hey mate, it looks like we are lost. Can you ask the pedestrian for directions?*

(negative politeness)

(35): #37: *I'll stop. Can you ask that person for directions?* (negative politeness)

(36): #19: *Let's ask this person!* (positive politeness)

(37): #2: *Hey, ask that person for directions!* (bald on-record)

## 7.9 Situation 1: Spanish responses:

The situations in the Spanish questionnaire were identical to those in the questionnaire for native English speakers. The Spanish translation of the situation is presented in Table 1: Situations in the questionnaire.

As I have already mentioned in the methodology, **44** Spanish native speakers completed the questionnaire. In the first situation, the majority of Spanish speakers used the negative politeness strategy as the head act (37 respondents) and 3 chose the bald-on-record strategy. Four participants did not fill it in as was required. The highly used internal modifiers were *simple conditional* and *imperfect subjunctive*. The imperfect subjunctive is a verb in the past tense in the subjunctive mood. The frequent external modifiers were grounder, the modifier *por favor (please)*, and thanks. Spanish speakers tend to use the verb *poder (can)* in simple

conditional or imperfect subjunctive most frequently. In this situation in the H-oriented questions, the form of the third person singular was used to address the hearer as an internal modifier.

**Table 10:** Situation 1: Spanish responses

Strategy type of the head act	Number of participants
On-record: negative politeness	37
Off-record	0
Bald-on-record	3
Internal modifiers	
Simple conditional	26
Imperfect subjunctive	6
Verb: <i>poder</i>	15
Verb: <i>gustar</i>	7
Verb: <i>querer</i>	8
<i>Por favor</i>	12
V form	14
T form	2
Syntactic downgrader: interrogative	13
External modifiers	
Thanks ( <i>gracias</i> )	6
grounder	22

The indirect strategies of head acts were used by all participants. I will illustrate the conventionally indirect strategy and the internal modifiers that were often used. In example, (38) and (39) participants used negative politeness as the head act strategy, and the participant in (40) used the bald-on-record strategy.

(38) #42 *Hola, buen día. Me enteré sobre su vacante de trabajo. ¿Podría darme más información por favor?*

Hello, good day. I heard past tense indicative about your Vform job vacancy, **Can** conditional simple **you** vform give infinitive me dative more information, please?

Hello, good day. I heard about your job vacancy. **Could you** give me more information, please?

(39) #5 *Buenos días, Quisiera pedir información sobre ...*

Good day, **I want** imperfect subjunctive to request information about...

Good day, **I would like** to request information about...

(40) #35 *Por favor necesito información sobre el trabajo anunciado.*

Please, **I need** present indicative information about the advertised job.

Please, **I need** information about the advertised job.

## 7.10 Situation 2: Spanish responses:

In this situation, seven participants did not fulfil the requirements of completing the discourse. Thirty-six native Spanish speakers used the **indirect negative politeness** strategy. Spanish speakers preferred to use simple conditional as an internal modifier.

**Table 11:** Situation 2: Spanish responses

Strategy type of the head act	Number of participants
On-record: negative politeness	36
Bald on-record	1
Internal modifiers	
Simple conditional	14
Imperfect subjunctive	6
Verb: <i>poder</i>	8
Verb: <i>gustar</i>	2
Verb: <i>querer</i>	6
<i>Por favor</i>	5
V form	21
T form	4
Syntactic downgrader: interrogative	20
External modifiers	
Thanks ( <i>gracias</i> )	7
grounder	27
preparator	5
apology	10

For illustration, samples (41) and (42) show the preferred on-record negative politeness strategy for the second situation. Both examples show modifier apology (*lo siento, disculpe*) and participant #8 also used grounder.

(41) #8: *Hola, lo siento, pero no me ha dado tiempo a terminar la presentación, crees que podría enviártela en un par de días?*

Hello, I am present indicative sorry, but not I got present perfect indicative time to finish the presentation, think present indicative you Tform that **I can** conditional simple send infinitive it to you Tform in couple of days?



Hello, I am sorry, but I have not got the time to finish the presentation, do you think **I could** send it to you in couple of days?

(42) #18: *Disculpe las molestias, pero me preguntaba si cabría la posibilidad de extender el plazo de la presentación para dentro de 2 semanas.*

Excuse imperative, Vform the inconvenient, but **I ask** past indicative if (it) fit conditional simple the possibility to extend infinitive the deadline of the presentation to next 2 weeks.

Excuse the inconvenient, but **I was wondering** if it would be possible to extend the deadline of the presentation to next 2 weeks.

### 7.11 Situation 3: Spanish responses:

In this situation, 31 Spanish speakers formed requests with the conventionally indirect **negative politeness** strategy and 10 speakers chose the direct strategy, and 3 speakers did not fill in this situation. The internal modifier *conditional simple* was much less frequent and the subjunctive was not used by any respondent, with the majority of responses in the indicative mood.

**Table 12:** Situation 3: Spanish responses

Strategy type of the head act	Number of participants
On-record: negative politeness	31
Bald on-record	10
Internal modifiers	
Simple condicional	16
Imperfect subjunctive	0
Verb: <i>poder</i>	16
<i>Por favor</i>	23
V form	31
T form	9
Syntactic downgrader: interrogative	21
External modifiers	
Thanks ( <i>gracias</i> )	6
grounder	5
apology	10

The negative politeness strategy is presented in (43) with indicative mood and in (44) with conditional simple. Speakers that used bald on-record strategy as in (45), combined their direct request with at least one modifier *por favor*.

(43) #21: *Me dejas ver tu DNI?*

Me accusative **let** present indicative, **you** Tform see your Tform DNI?

**Will you let** me see your DNI?

(44) #43: *Me **podría** enseñar su identificación, por favor.*

Me **can** conditional simple **you** Vform show your Vform identification, please.

**Could you** show me your identification, please.

(45) #23: *Por favor, **enséñame** tu DNI. Gracias.*

Please, **show** imperative, Tform **me** dative your Tform DNI. Thank you.

Please, **show me** your DNI. Thank you.

## 7.12 Situation 4: Spanish responses:

Similarly, to previous situations, in the fourth situation Spanish speakers preferred the conventionally indirect strategy *negative politeness* as only 4 participants chose the direct bald on-record strategy. Compared to the previous situations with high social distance, in this situation, Spanish speakers already preferred the *T form*, and only 3 respondents still used the *V form*.

**Table 13:** Situation 4: Spanish responses

Strategy type of the head act	Number of participants
On-record: negative politeness	40
Bald on-record	4
Internal modifiers	
Simple conditional	25
Imperfect subjunctive	0
Verb: <i>poder</i>	29
<i>Por favor</i>	21
V form	3
T form	40
Syntactic downgrader: interrogative	32
Diminishers	16
External modifiers	
Thanks ( <i>gracias</i> )	15
grounder	15
apology	3

In (46) is an example of the preferred negative politeness strategy and in

(46) is presented the bald on record response in situation 4 among Spanish speakers.

(46) #24: *Por favor, **podrías** atender mis llamadas durante el tiempo que estoy fuera? Solo serán unos minutos.*

Please, **can** conditional simple, **you** Tform attend infinitive my calls while the time that I am present indicative gone? Only be future indicative few minutes.

Please, **could you** attend my calls while the time I am gone? It will be just few minutes.

(47) #39: *Hola, hágame un favor, sí? **Atiéndeme** un momento el teléfono mientras yo voy a recoger unas cosas, disculpe y gracias.*

Hello, do imperative me dative a favour, yes? **Attend** imperative, Tform **me** accusative a moment the telephone while I go present indicative to pick up some things, excuse present indicative me and thank you.

Hello, do a favour for me, yes? **Attend me** for a moment on the telephone while I am going to pick up some things, excuse me and thank you.

### 7.13 Situation 5: Spanish responses

In contrast to the 4 previous situations, in this situation, although native speakers of Spanish still predominantly chose the indirect strategy (27 respondents), there were 15 responses with the direct strategy as well. All participants used the T-form in this situation. The majority of respondents used **indicative mood** and only 7 participants used simple conditional. Two respondents did not fulfil the requirements for completing the task.

**Table 14:** Situation 5: Spanish responses

Strategy type of the head act	Number of participants
On-record: negative politeness	27
Bald on-record	15
Internal modifiers	
Simple conditional	7
Verb: <i>poder</i>	9
<i>Por favor</i>	24
V form	0
T form	42
Syntactic downgrader: interrogative	22
External modifiers	
Thanks ( <i>gracias</i> )	2
grounder	12
vocative	13

(48) #30: *Hey cómo estás? ¿Me **podrías** prestar tus apuntes de la semana pasada para ponerme al día?*

Hey, how are present indicative you Tform? Me dativ **can** conditional simple **you** Tform lend infinitive your Tform notes from the last week for bring me up to date?

Hey, how are you? **Could you** lend me your notes from the last week to catch up?

(49) #36: *Por fa, **préstame** tu libreta para copiar las clases.*

Please, **lend** imperative, Tform **me** dativ your Tform notebook to copy the lessons.

Please, **lend me** your notebook to copy the lessons.

Respondent #30 preferred to address his friend indirectly with the negative politeness strategy. On the other hand, respondent #36 chose the direct bald on-record strategy as the head act with the modifier *por favor*. All respondents that formulated the request directly, used at least one modifier to lessen the threat to the H's face.

#### 7.14 Situation 6: Spanish responses:

The forty-four participants used the indirect strategy of negative politeness in the survey. Only 1 participant used bald on-record, however, with many modifiers and 1 participant did not respond to this situation.

**Table 15:** Situation 6: Spanish responses

Strategy type of the head act	Number of participants
On-record: negative politeness	42
Bald on-record	1
Internal modifiers	
Simple conditional	21
Verb: <i>poder</i>	17
<i>Por favor</i>	11
V form	0
T form	43
Syntactic downgrader: interrogative	34
External modifiers	
Thanks ( <i>gracias</i> )	1
grounder	17
vocative	25

(50) #14: *Rosie **tienes** algún inconveniente en prestarme tu auto para yo poder ir a la fiesta de mi amigo? Por Favor*

Rosie **have** present indicative **you** Tform any inconvenient in lend infinitive me dative your Tform car so I can infinitive go infinitive to the party of my friend? Please

Rosie **do you have** any inconvenient in lending me your car so I can go to the party of my friend? Please

(51) #16: *Oye, Rosie. ¿Sería posible que me prestas tu coche?*

Hey, Rosie. **Be** conditional simple (it) possible that me dative lend present indicative YOU Tform your Tform car?

Hey, Rosie. **Would it be** possible that you lend me your car?

The requests in (50) and (51) are both formulated indirectly, both with interrogative sentences. The participant #14 used modifiers as: *algún inconveniente*, vocative and *por favor*. Participant #16 also used vocative and formulated the head act with the internal modifier verb *sería* (conditional simple) and the lexical modifier *posible* (possible).

### 7.15 Situation 7: Spanish responses:

The Spanish speakers preferred the indirect strategy in this situation as well. Only 3 participants used the direct bald on-record strategy. Two respondents did not answer this question. The most frequent modifiers were grounder, *please* and vocatives: *amigo* (friend), *Manuel*, *José*.

**Table 16:** Situation 7: Spanish responses

Strategy type of the head act	Number of participants
On-record: negative politeness	39
Bald on-record	3
Internal modifiers	
Simple condicional	13
Verb: <i>poder</i>	29
<i>Por favor</i>	24
V form	0
T form	44
Syntactic downgrader: interrogative	34
External modifiers	
Thanks ( <i>gracias</i> )	7
grounder	11
vocative	13

(52) #8: *Oye, ¿Podrías comprarme fruta, porfa? Ahora no puedo ir contigo.*

Hey, **can** conditional simple **you** Tform buy me fruit, please? Now not can present indicative I go infinitive with you Tform.

Hey, **could you** buy me fruit, please? I cannot go with you now.

(53) #36: *José cómprame frutas que estoy enredado ahora, las que tú sabes que me gustan.*

José **buy** imperative, Tform **me** dative fruits as I am present indicative busy now, the ones that you Tform know present indicative I like present indicative.

José **buy me** fruits as I am busy now, the ones that you know I like.

The first sample (52) is an illustration of the negative politeness strategy with *conditional*, *interrogative* and *grounder* as modifiers. In (52) #8: *Oye, ¿Podrías comprarme fruta, porfa? Ahora no puedo ir contigo.*

Hey, **can** conditional simple **you** Tform buy me fruit, please? Now not can present indicative I go infinitive with you Tform.

Hey, **could you** buy me fruit, please? I cannot go with you now.

(53) is the example of the bald on-record strategy which was, however, used very little.

### 7.16 Situation 8: Spanish responses:

In the last situation, 28 Spanish speakers preferred to formulate requests with the direct strategy **bald on-record** and 16 chose the conventionally indirect strategy negative or positive politeness. The modifiers as *please* (por favor), interrogative or grounder occurred rarely as illustrated in **Table 17**.

**Table 17:** Situation 8: Spanish responses

Strategy type of the head act	Number of participants
On-record: negative politeness	13
On-record: positive politeness	3
Bald on-record	28
Internal modifiers	
Simple conditional	2
Verb: <i>poder</i>	5
<i>Por favor</i>	9
V form	0

T form	44
Syntactic downgrader: interrogative	9
External modifiers	
Thanks ( <i>gracias</i> )	0
grounder	4
vocative	3

(54) #43: *Pregúntale a esta persona que pasa como llegar.*

**Ask** imperative, Tform **him/her** dative this person who passes present indicative how to get there.

**Ask** this person who passes how to get there.

(55) #41: *Vamos a preguntarle a esa persona.*

**Go** present indicative **we** to ask infinitive him/her to that person.

**Let's go** ask that person.

(56) #19: *Le puedes preguntar la dirección a ese señor?*

Him dative **can** present indicative **you** Tform ask infinitive for directions that man?

**Can you** ask that man for directions?

In (54) I have illustrated the most frequent strategy in this situation, which is the direct bald on-record strategy. The example in (55) is the positive politeness strategy as it contains *the inclusive* “we” and the second (56) is the negative politeness strategy.

## 8 Conclusion

The questionnaire was completed by 45 native English speakers and 44 native Spanish speakers. In almost all presented situations native English and Spanish speakers preferred the conventionally indirect **negative politeness strategy** for making requests in situations with low D as well as in those between participants with high D. There was only one exception, in the last situation with equal social “power” (P), low social distance (D), the preferred strategy by native Spanish speakers was the direct bald-on-record strategy. Situations 1 to 4 were among the participants in communication with high social distance and situations 5 to 8 were between two close friends, therefore with low social distance. All situations that were used in the research are described in the **Table 1**. I will summarize each situation separately.

In the first situation, there was a high number of English (40) and Spanish (37) speakers who chose the negative politeness strategy. In both Spanish and English responses, the most likely used internal modifiers were *please* (*por favor* in Spanish), **interrogative** and **grounder**.

The negative politeness strategy was used by 38 native English speakers and 36 native Spanish speakers in the second situation. English speakers tend to use more the modifier *please* than Spanish speakers used *por favor*. Again, interrogative and grounder as mitigating devices prevailed here in both languages.

In the third situation, 36 English speakers preferred negative politeness as well as 31 Spanish speakers, however, a quite significant number of Spanish speakers (10 respondents) and English speakers (9) responded in the direct bald on-record strategy. The direct strategy was in all cases accompanied by at least one modifier *por favor* and in many cases the direct request was also accompanied by an apology and an explanation of the situation – a grounder.

In the fourth situation, there was almost equal use of the negative politeness strategy, 39 in English and 40 in Spanish. In both questionnaires, along with the previously mentioned modifiers, there were relatively numerous representations of diminishers as *few minutes/unos minutes, for a while/por un momento*.

Nevertheless, there was a greater difference in situation 5, which was an interaction between two friends. The majority (43 respondents) of English speakers chose negative politeness, while in the Spanish survey, this strategy was chosen by 27 respondents. Fifteen Spanish speakers responded with the bald on-record strategy with the modifier *por favor* that was usually presented as *porfa* in situations between friends. It is not a word of a particular dialect. Since this abbreviation of *por favor* was used by speakers from various Latin American countries, but also by speakers from Spain.

In Situation 6, there was equal use of the negative politeness strategy 42 in English and 42 in Spanish. In English responses there were many consultative devices as *do you think, is there any chance* as external modifiers that hardly appeared in Spanish where they preferred grounders and vocatives and especially conditional as internal modifiers.

Situation 7 revealed a similar result, with 42 English speakers and 39 Spanish speakers using negative politeness. In this situation, the only highly frequent modifiers were *please/por favor* and *interrogative* in both languages.



As I have already mentioned, the only striking difference was in the situation eight. Thirty English-speaking respondents used negative politeness while 28 Spanish speakers preferred the direct bald-on-record strategy. The eighth situation was the only one where respondents in both questionnaires also used positive politeness, however, only in a few cases. This is the situation with the smallest number of external modifiers for both languages. English has a much higher presence of the interrogative sentence type than Spanish.

In conclusion, the preferred strategy for making requests was the **negative politeness strategy in interrogative** sentences in both English and Spanish language in both socially distant and socially close situations. English native speakers preferred to form requests with the auxiliaries *could* and *would*. Only in the third and fourth situations the most frequent auxiliary verb was *can*. Spanish native speakers mostly used *condicional simple* (simple conditional) or *indicativo presente* (present indicative) in their requests. *Imperfecto de cortesía*, *subjuntivo imperfecto* (past tense in the subjunctive mood) or *indicativo imperfecto* (past tense in the indicative mood), was hardly used by Spanish native speakers for requests. The widely used verb in Spanish was *poder* (can) in both the conditional and in the indicative mood. The only striking difference between requests in English and Spanish is that the bald on-record strategy, which is a direct request that can threaten the negative face of H more than the negative politeness strategy, appeared more often in Spanish, especially in interactions between friends. The bald on-record strategy is formed with the imperative mood in Spanish *pregúntale* (ask him). Nevertheless, the imperative mood was accompanied by *por favor* (please) in most responses to mitigate the threat towards H's negative face. The prevalent external modifier was *grounder* in both languages.

Since respondents in my study were from various Spanish-speaking and English-speaking countries, this conclusion in my research can be considered to be universal for both languages. However, some future research could focus on a particular country and its dialects and perhaps investigate differences between lexical modifiers in each dialect. I find it fascinating to examine the speech acts in terms of prosody and body language as in Hübscher et al. from 2022 and I believe there should be more such studies. If I were to make a change, it would probably be to reduce the number of situations so that the questionnaire would not take so long and to have an equal number of respondents from different countries.

## 9 Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá porovnáním rozdílů a podobností strategií ve formulování žádostí mezi anglicky a španělsky rodilými mluvčími. V teoretické části jsem se zaměřila a představila možné strategie podle studie Brown and Levinson z roku 1987. Výzkumné otázky zkoumaly, jaká strategie je v daném jazyce preferována a nejvíce využívána rodilými mluvčími s rozdílnou sociální vzdáleností. Dále tato studie ukázala, jaké jsou nejvíce používané formy zmírňujících prostředků (*mitigating devices*) pro snížení ohrožení nezávislosti posluchače. Metodologie a výzkum byl inspirován formou kompletní diskurzu (*Discourse Completion Task*). Blum-Kulka a Olshtain tuto metodu použili u svého výzkumu z roku 1984. Doplnění diskurzu je jedna z nejvíce používaných metod u výzkumů mezikulturní pragmatiky. Pro anglicky mluvící a španělsky mluvící rodilé mluvčí byly pro výzkum vytvořeny dva dotazníky, které obsahovaly celkem osm situací. Úkolem respondentů bylo doplnit interakci, která jim byla v situaci představena.

Analýza výsledků ukázala a potvrdila závěry výzkumů od: Fukushima 1996, Inka Flöck 2016. V angličtině jsou žádosti převážně formulovány tázací větou. Dále potvrdila, že anglicky rodilí mluvčí volí konvenční nepřímou strategii (*conventional indirect strategy*) pro formulování žádostí (Fukushima, 1996). Ilka Flöck ve své studii uvedla, že rodilí mluvčí angličtiny upřednostňují otázky na způsobilost (*conditions of ability*), které se tvoří s pomocnými slovesy *can* nebo *could* (2016). Tyto pomocná slovesa převažovaly v mém výzkumu taktéž a početné zastoupení mělo i modální sloveso *would*. Dále můj výzkum potvrdil, že nejčastěji rodilí mluvčí angličtiny používají vysvětlení situace, *grounder*, jako externí modifikátor (Fukushima, 1996, Blum-Kulka, 1984).

Vyhodnocení výsledků žádostí ve španělštině potvrdilo formulování žádostí, které je popsáno v knize *Hablar en español* a taktéž ve výsledcích studie od Márquez Reiter (Álvarez 2005, Márquez Reiter 2000). Nejčastější forma žádosti ve španělštině je tázací věta s konvenční nepřímou strategií, tedy stejně jako v angličtině. Dále jsem zaznamenala stejný výsledek jako Márquez Reiter, tedy takový, že se používá rozkaz pro žádosti více ve španělštině než v angličtině (2000). Rozkaz se používá u přímé strategie *bald on-record strategy*. Alfred Álvarez ve své knize uvedl, že mezi mluvčím a posluchačem, kteří mezi sebou mají určitou sociální vzdálenost jako například: zaměstnanec/zaměstnavatel, uchazeč o práci/zaměstnavatel, se vytrácí forma vykání (*usted/ustedes* ve španělštině) a to především u rodilých mluvčí ze Španělska (2005, 29). V mé studii sice převládaly mluvčí z Latinské Ameriky, ale všichni rodilí mluvčí ze Španělska u těchto situací použili formu *usted*. Jak u mluvčích z Latinské Ameriky, tak u mluvčích ze Španělska byla použita forma tykání (*tú* ve španělštině) u všech situací mezi kamarády. Mezi nástroji pro zmírnění žádosti převažovalo u obou jazyků vysvětlení situace (*grounder*) a lexikální modifikátor *prosim* (*please/por favor*).

Bakalářská práce ukázala, že mezi strategiemi žádostí v angličtině a ve španělštině není markantní rozdíl. V obou jazycích rodilí mluvčí preferují stejnou nepřímou strategii mezi mluvčími, kteří mají mezi sebou blízký vtaah i mezi těmi, kteří blízký vtaah mezi sebou nemají. Převážně se mezi angličtinou a španělštinou neliší ani užití zmírňujících modifikátorů.

## **List of abbreviations:**

**DCT** – Discourse Completion Task

**S** – speaker

**H** – hearer (addressee)

**D** – Social Distance factor

**P** – Social “power” factor

**R** – Ranking of imposition factor

**CP** – Cooperative Principle

**PP** – Principle of Politeness

**MP** – Model Person

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