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NOTIONS OF IMPOLITENESS AT THE ARGENTINIAN WORKPLACE

Representations and evaluations from users and learners of EFL for business purposes

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's Degree in English Language Teaching and Acquisition in Multilingual Contexts

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ABSTRACT

Despite some attention given to the teaching of politeness phenomena from a non-universalistic view (Brown, 2010; Cashman, 2006; Meier, 1997; Nurmukhamedov & Kim, 2010; Sharifian, 2008; Uso-Juan & Martinez-Flor, 2007), impoliteness has largely been ignored by both teachers and researchers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Mugford, 2008, 2009). This is particularly true in the area of English for Business Purposes (BP), where the understanding of cross-cultural variation in the perception of impoliteness is but starting (Culpeper, Crawshaw, & Harrison, 2008; Culpeper, Marti, Mei, Nevala, & Schauer, 2010). Given such state-of-the-art, I contribute to this area by researching first-order notions of impoliteness (Watts, 2003) as it emerges from Argentinian users and learners of EFL-BP when exchanging emails with U.S. American employees in workplace contexts. From a natural corpus of emails, I select two syndicated conflictive email sequences (words=939) as the basis for the design of research instruments. These involve a questionnaire and a discourse completion test to Argentinian participants (n=22), as well as a semi-structured interview to U.S. American interviewees (n=10). Argentinian participants characterize impoliteness through features referring to *aggressiveness*, *imperativeness*, *inappropriateness*, *inconsiderateness*, *heedlessness*, *unfairness*, and *evasiveness*, while U.S. Americans referred to *interrupting*, *tardiness*, and *uncooperativeness*. Initial pedagogic implications for the teaching of impoliteness are derived from these results.

Keywords: impoliteness, workplace, emails, Argentina, USA

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INTRODUCTION

Impoliteness phenomena have been on the spot for some time now, with promising insights but still with several unanswered questions. One of such questions involves the intercultural variation, evaluation, and representation of impoliteness in relation to *face* (Goffman, 1967) and its management within intercultural communication (Culpeper et al., 2008; Culpeper et al., 2010). Despite the advances made from a pragmatic perspective (D. Bousfield & Grainger, 2010), the relation of certain communicative acts with impoliteness (including *blaming*, *criticizing*, and *reproaching*, among others) is yet to be studied, as well as their production in specific communicative situations. From a more discursive perspective, some studies account for impoliteness as a form of interpersonal micro-management (Locher & Watts, 2005, p. 11), but this view has not passed without harsh criticisms (Haugh, 2007; Terkourafi, 2005). Within the areas of Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) and the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), the studies focusing on impoliteness are but scarce, with general incidental references to the phenomena involving the pedagogical implications of teaching such phenomena (Gerrard Mugford, 2008, 2009).

Notwithstanding theoretical shortcomings and lack of sufficient research, I[1] agree with Mugford (2008, p. 382) that learners of English as a Foreign Language should be instructed on impoliteness, both at pragmatic and discursive levels. This is

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[1] This pronominal use is purposeful. It stresses the profoundly interpretative nature of this study, without abandoning the goal of constraining subjectivity to a methodological research with some empirical results. U.S. American English language variant is intended throughout.

particularly true, I would add, for those learners of English for Business Purposes (EFL-BP)[2] who are currently offering their professional services in a multilingual work context and want to improve their language proficiency in its interpersonal functional dimension (Halliday, 1994). Sure enough, this is not an easy path. Impoliteness is still used as an umbrella term that encompasses diverse and potentially different theoretical notions and communicative activities, including negativity, uncooperativeness, rudeness, aggressiveness, and even violence. This ontological conglomerate makes the area blurry and may discourage EFL-BP teachers from implementing their pedagogic designs in the language classroom. The concern is persuasive enough: if impoliteness, as it is the case with so many other pragmatic and discursive items (Alcón-Soler, 2008), is so sensitive to situational and contextual factors that even its notional grasp is at stake, why bother teaching it? An answer I am inclined to present is one that positions impoliteness as a key component of language, communication, and human behavior in general. Granted such a position, impoliteness may be performed during a communicative interaction as any other language item, notwithstanding its *a priori* ontological understanding; in other words, learners may just *perform* impoliteness with their second language following first language transfers (Barron, 2003, p. 39). Following this, the inclusion of impoliteness in the EFL-BP syllabus, particularly for adult learners with specific purposes, should be seriously considered.

I want to contribute towards this direction by offering an exploratory, qualitative study on certain representations and evaluations of impoliteness made by Argentinian users and advanced learners of EFL-BP, as it emerges in communicative interactions via emails with U.S. American employees working in transnational companies with subsidiaries in Buenos Aires City. The focus is to elicit communicative practices and

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[2] Although a differentiation would be more appropriate, I use the expression "business purposes" as the superordinate encompassing language used in all work-related tasks, including professions and professional activities with specific purposes.

language resources of Argentinian employees using EFL-BP to perform impoliteness when conducting their professional services at multilingual workplaces, particularly as they relate to U.S. American corporate organizations. The goal of doing this is to present empirical implications for teaching impoliteness to EFL-BP learners, particularly to Argentinian ones. These implications should not be considered final, but rather part of a systematic set that can be expanded in studies with a larger scope than the present. The ultimate aim is to output pedagogic interventional design proposals targeting the development of advanced language skills (Alcón-Soler, in press; Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan's, 2006; Martínez-Flor, 2008) for the management of impoliteness in multilinguistic workplaces. This study should be considered a first step or the starting point towards that aim.

Two terms initiate and sustain my research purpose. By "representation" I refer to discursive processes enacted by the interlocutors of a certain communicative interaction, in which their communicative activities are attributed *collectively* according to factors encompassing ideas of broad sociocultural expectations, constructs, or structures (Eelen, 2001, pp. 127-158; Haugh, 2010, p. 11), which may very well be false, incongruent, misrepresented, or unlikely. Following the same line, by "evaluation" I refer to the same discursive process, but this one attributed *singularly*, according to situational and contextual factors including interpersonal shared experiences (R. B. Arundale, 2010; O'Driscoll, 2007), individual or mutual goals (Spencer-Oatey, 2005), or moment-by-moment co-constructions (Locher & Watts, 2008). Given the current state-of-the-art in the field, the representations and evaluations of impoliteness are necessarily a *post factum* interpretative reconstruction dependent

upon the analyst, its corpus, its instruments, and the in-textualization[3] of the raw data obtained during the research process. Despite positions to the contrary {Haugh, 2007 #4650;Terkourafi, 2008 #6737;Kaul-de-Marlangeon, 2012 #6746, pp. 73-78}, I firmly believe on the non-predictability, case-by-case, and group-bounded enactment of impoliteness, as expressed in communicative activities with different meanings, values, and ideologies {Locher, 2004 #930;Locher, 2006 #4601;Locher, 2010 #6486;Watts, 2003 #492;Watts, 2008 #4634}. This position suits better, I would defend, the teaching practices within the EFL-BP classroom.

As I mentioned, I set to study the representations and evaluations of impoliteness by Argentinian employees when they are set to work with U.S. Americans, particularly when using emails. Email has become such a pervasive genre in transnational work contexts (Pérez, 1999; Vela-Delfa, 2005) that it is difficult to imagine offshore business (particularly its micromanagement) without these computer-mediated and asynchronous texts. Email genre has evolved to such an extent that it developed more sophisticated features and, consequently, new demands for both consumers and producers. Consider, for example, the importance of using the "in-copy" email fields (Skovholt & Svennevig, 2006), following the corresponding address systems (Clyne, 2009; Heisler & Crabill, 2006), or reconstructing the embedded systems of long email chains (Gimenez, 2006). All of these are valid areas for further research from ILP and EFL perspectives. However, due to the intrinsic difficulty of accessing naturally occurring corpora compromising impoliteness (Kessler, 2010), it is rare to come across related studies in business contexts, where confidential and privacy concerns lessen the opportunities for second and foreign language research[4].

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[3] A corpus (re)creates texts of its own, according to the research goals and analytic interests (Briones & Golluscio, 1994).

[4] This is not to deny research within academic contexts (consult, for example, Chang & Haugh, 2011; Handford & Koester, 2010; J. Holmes, Marra, & Schnurr, 2008; Schnurr, Marra, & Holmes, 2007).

As interesting as I find it, it is beyond the scope of this study to offer a text analysis detailing the interactive and pragmatic features of emails. However, I base this study on research instruments developed from a still-growing corpus of natural emails (see the Supplementary Materials document). This corpus comprising different email sequences offered for this research by Argentinian informants, who are or were users and learners of EFL-BP at the same company[5]. These informants syndicated their email sequences as part of communicative events where negativity, uncooperativeness, conflict, and impoliteness are syndicated and inextricably intertwined. From this corpus, I selected two email sequences in particular, based on the informants' perceived high degree of negativity and conflict, and I explore them identifying interactive, initiative-responsive dialogic structures (Linell, 1993, 1988) and communicative acts (Allwood, 1976, 2007), as I record in Appendix A. These sequences motivated some of the items setting up the questionnaire presented in Appendix B and, in particular, the scenarios designed for the discourse completion test (DCT) presented in Appendix C. For contrast purposes, I also conducted a semi-structured interview to U.S. American employees working or having worked with some of the Argentinian participants responding to the instruments, using relevant items from the questionnaire (see Appendix D).

The three research instruments are close to an ethnographic approach (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972) for eliciting participants' views, beliefs, and perceptions of impoliteness in general, and communicated through emails in particular, within their workplace environments. This involves identifying *emic* (Spencer-Oatey, 2005; Spencer-Oatey & Jiang, 2003) notions of impoliteness as they appear in the elicited data, as best represented by the sociocultural group in focus. Questionnaires and tests related to politeness have been extensively used in Spanish (Bernal, 2008a; Bolívar,

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[5] Anonymity and un-traceability conditions were promised and are satisfied in the corpus.

2008; Bravo, 2008c; Contreras-Fernández, 2008; Hernández-Flores, 2003, 2008, 2009; Murillo Medrano, 2008; Murillo-Medrano, 2005; Piatti, 2003). These tests are designed specifically for the speech, discourse, or practice community under study and do not follow a standardized format yet. As Bravo (2010, pp. 54-57) explains, some of the inductive interpretations made by the analyst conducting a text analysis may be constrained and also achieve some degree of empirical demonstration by incorporating an *a posteriori* consultative phase in the research design of the study. In the case of this study, the consultative phase is *a priori* to possible upcoming or ongoing research, particularly in its initial phases, as Gumperz (2001, p. 223) suggests.

This study is divided in three main parts. In the first one, I provide a theoretical outline for the study, quickly reviewing the extensive literature found on impoliteness and then going through the key notions used throughout. This framework is general in nature: it defines basic terminology and then discusses the notions of impoliteness accepted by the literature. This first part results in a systematization of previous related studies into four theoretical dimensions of impoliteness that guide the interpretations of the emic notions identified in the data elicited by the research instruments. In the second part, I develop the purpose of the study, identify research questions, and discuss the methodology I followed to approach such questions. In this part, I describe the design of the questionnaire, the DTC, and the semi-structured interviews, providing details on how I gathered the natural corpus of emails and its use in the research instruments. Then, in the third part of the study, I present the results obtained with each instrument. Considering the amount of information obtained, I decided to discuss results in the same section. I discuss pedagogic implications for EFL-BP teaching the final section of this part.

PART I - THEORIZING IMPOLITENESS

Interest on impoliteness phenomena has increased exponentially within language scholarship over the last ten years. Researchers have taken notice that impoliteness is at the crossroads of how users relate pragmatic, discursive, and interactive patterns and practices of language use within specific psychological, social, and cultural realities. To get account for the phenomena from a language perspective, however, it is necessary to refer to a complex theoretical framework, one that addresses norms of communicative behavior during a social encounter, aspects of communicative interaction, and interlocutors' representations, evaluations, and production, all of which involve compromising negative feelings and conflictive situations.

Assuming this complexity, impoliteness may be realized when an expected communicative activity is not performed for a given situation (such as a norm, a behavior, a mutual agreement on something), or when the interlocutors' proceed to aggravate communication through harm or aggression. In addition, impoliteness involves opposing feelings exchanged during the interaction, negative identity practices (such as gossiping), or socio-emotional features that are deemed unconstructive for the success of communication (including cues such as crying or yelling). As importantly as well, and from a more discursive approach, impoliteness may be considered as a rationalized strategy to evaluate behaviors, construct an adversarial discourse, and coerce, oppose, or delegitimize those involved in such a discourse.

In this part of the study, I provide a necessarily quick overview of the literature produced within impoliteness research. The review is based on general or more theoretical language studies, and not really on applied linguistics for the teaching of English as a second or foreign language. Indeed, this is quite an area of opportunity to further impoliteness research within EFL-BP. Following my literature review, I present a theoretical framework that provides the basis and accounts for the key notions and terms used throughout the study; in particular, the notion of impoliteness itself.

1   Literature review

The field of Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) has examined in some detail the transfer of pragmatic and discursive strategies and resources from L1 to L2 and vice-versa (Alcón-Soler, 2002, 2005, 2006). It has done so by observing the use of communicative functions and linguistic items related to a linguistic, communicative, and discursive phenomena from one culture to the other, such as the study of word order and vocabulary (Bates, 1974; Ikeda, 1999), modifiers (Martínez-Flor, 2007), suggestions (Martínez-Flor & Soler, 2007), requests (Donahue, 1981; Owen, 2002; Usó-Juan, 2007; Walters, 1979), and apologies (Bohnke, 2001; Kondo, 1997; Nakajima, 2003; Pearson, 2002; Tamanaha, 2003). This considerable amount of ILP research, though necessarily partial for this review, seem to coincide that language users resort to their L1 pragmalinguistic knowledge, particularly when stressing the force and intent of an utterance or speech act, as well as resorting to the sociopragmatic knowledge from their first language (L1) when responding to the context and social conditions of a given interaction (Belz & Kinginger, 2003; Hill, 1998; Ikeda, 1999; Matsumura, 2003; Pearson, 2002; Reeder, 2001; Tello Rueda, 2005).

Despite the interests and results within ILP field, there are fewer studies examining how learners actively use resources and strategies for the management and

expression of impoliteness in a second or foreign language (L2). In fact, compared to the attention drawn by politeness phenomena (Beebe, 1995; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Harada, 1996; Hinkel, 1997; Ladegaard, 2004; LoCastro, 1994), to this day impoliteness has largely been ignored by both teachers and researchers of English as a Foreign Language (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2010; Gerrard Mugford, 2008, 2009). This is particularly true in the area of English for Business Purposes, where the understanding of cross-cultural variation in the perception of impoliteness is but starting (Culpeper et al., 2008; Culpeper et al., 2010).

The first approaches to the study of impoliteness originated indirectly, almost as byproducts of frameworks specifically designed to understand politeness phenomena. For example, the notion of impoliteness that follows from Lakoff (1973; 1989), Leech (1983), Brown and Levinson (1987), Watts (1989), and Fraser (1990) have in common a lack of adherence to rules, maxims or principles, social norms, face wants or needs, politic behaviors, or conversational contracts, respectively. The common denominator of this "lack of" encompasses impoliteness as disobedience, indiscipline, or insubordination to a certain set of communicative behaviors and shared cultural values. What the cited authors understand by impoliteness is, then, another device to enable sociocultural adherence and compliance rules for a communicative interaction, according to given situational conditions. Thus, the first consequence of this theoretical perspective is a notion of impoliteness understood as "absence or lack of politeness", which is near to its lexicographical gloss. The second consequence regards impoliteness as any communicative behavior involving confrontation with negative intentions (R. T. Lakoff, 1989, p. 189) or disturbs social harmony through conflicts, emergencies, or following communicative efficiency reasons (P. Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 6). This ontological construction of impoliteness, parasitic on the notion of politeness, led to a

polarization between bivalent communicative behaviors as "polite" or "positive" and "impolite" or "negative" behaviors, depending on the corpus under study and the formalization degree of the theoretical model and methodological analysis involved (Eelen, 2001, pp. 95-105) (cf. Eelen, 2001, p. 95-105).

Two early works by Culpeper et al. (1996; 2003) exemplify the relation of impoliteness as inversely bound to politeness. To analyze the "social imbalance" that emerges as a consequence of impolite behavior in interaction, Culpeper (1996, p. 350) proposes a set of communicative strategies designed to describe the interlocutors' mutual attacks, which, in turn, create and promote social conflict and disharmony (Culpeper, et al., 2003, p. 1546). This concept involves actions promoted by a "manifest and malicious intent" (Culpeper, 2003, p. 1550) to cause harm or offend positive qualities that an interlocutor claims for itself, following Goffman's (1967) notion of *face*. In subsequent work, Culpeper (2005; 2003; 2008; 2010) analyses some of the difficulties and limitations of his understanding of impoliteness, arguing for a "basic definition" for the phenomena as *face attack*. This author introduces a notion of impoliteness not so heavily relying on *omission* or *failure* ("lack of"), but rather on the speaker's intention of damaging the listener's face or, at least, how the listener perceives and reconstructs the speaker's communicative behavior as intended damage.

More recently, other authors have based their studies on the same line, summarized by Bousfield and Locher (2008, p. 3) when they state that impoliteness is a behavior that "aggravates social image" in a particular context. Bousfield (2007; 2007; 2008) understands impoliteness as face-threatening acts that are not mitigated when mitigation is required, with deliberate and aggravated attack to inflict maximum damage, whereas the recipient the attack notices the threat or damage. In addition, Terkourafi (2008) highlights the socially normative aspect of impoliteness and identifies

those cases in which a given expression does not conform to the conventions of the context of occurrence, threatening the addressee's face. To the features of interlocutive intentionality and social normativity, Kienpointner (2008b, p. 245) adds a socio-emotional dimension to impoliteness that helps in identifying communicative behaviors that are prototypically rude. For the author, rude behavior derives from non-cooperative or competitive relationships that destabilize the interlocutors and fosters a climate of disrespect and dislike for egocentric purposes. These are determined, at least in part, by variables such as power, distance, and scales of emotional attitudes and cost-benefit factors (consult R. T. Lakoff, 1989), depending on the speech community under study.

The studies of Watts and Locher (Locher, 2004, 2006, 2010; Locher & Watts, 2005; Watts, 2003, 2005, 2008) provide a more discursive analytical and methodological approach to systematize an interpretive model for impoliteness. Their proposal is to advance the notion of "relational work", which would account for the efforts individuals invest in negotiating social relationships. This effort includes exchanging, preponderantly, interpersonal meanings (Halliday, 1994) and includes a communicative *continuum* between politeness and impoliteness (Kaul, 2008; Lavandera, 1992). Following the anthropological differentiation between *emic* and *etic* cultural descriptions (Pike, 1967), Wattts and Locher differentiate between first-order and second-order (im)politeness.[6] First-order impoliteness refers to how interlocutors make use the words "impolite" and "impoliteness" to refer explicitly to their own communicative behaviors and others', while second-order impoliteness would refer to the theoretical models developed by analysts to account for the same behaviors. This differentiation has two consequences. First, interlocutors' evaluations on what they regard as realizations of impoliteness are subject to sociocultural variation and hence

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[6] See Spencer-Oatey (2003) and Eelen (2001) for a more systematic account of *emic* and *etic* approaches in politeness studies.

one same communicative behavior may be deemed as both polite and impolite depending on the evaluation, even when the social and situational contexts remain the same. Second, as others have already expressed (Briz, 2004; Janet Holmes, 1995; Watts, 2005), there is no linguistic expression inherently impolite. The consequence of this is important: whatsoever the interlocutors' "impolite" intentionality, their communicative behavior is subject to open interpretations concurrent to the social practices being enacted and cognitive co-construction of interlocutive meanings. As such, the notion of impoliteness emerges from the same interlocutors, according to their social, communicative, and textual practices. Sometimes, interlocutors mark impoliteness explicitly (for example, through certain communicative acts such as complaints or accusations), but oftentimes this notion is "off the record", being co-constructed discursively and cognitively.

From this quick literature review on the work done within impoliteness phenomena, it is already evident the "eclecticism and diaspora" (Derek Bousfield & Culpeper, 2008) within this interdisciplinary field. This is especially evident when it comes to the description and interpretation of data and the tension between general and particular instances of language use. The pragmatic and discursive approaches I have identified in this section aim at sketching how the most salient studies account for linguistic and extra-linguistic realities converge in communicative behaviors, as well as to confirm the idea that pragmatic and discursive notions of impoliteness are not mutually exclusive. The relatively new collections from Bousfield & Culpeper (2008) (2008), Rodriguez Alfano (2009), and Bravo (2009, 2005) contain studies that are geared to a greater or lesser extent, explicitly or implicitly, to take this condition of interdisciplinary in the study of impoliteness.

Research incorporating an interest from an ILP perspective is scant. I can highlight, however, Garcés Conejos's (1995; 2004) studies, in which the author demonstrates that the pragmatic views dealing with L2 communication tend to be almost exclusively speaker-centered and based on the code system, as well as focused on the coding and decoding of linguistic items without much consideration to the overall context of the communicative situation. This view is also shared by Meier (1997), who argues that research involving "rules of (im)politeness" should not form the basis of the EFL teaching and, more broadly, L2 pedagogy. This author maintains that teaching politeness in L2 should be re-oriented towards the notion of "appropriateness" and on centering the awareness rising of the learners' culture. Similarly, Garcés Conejos (op. cit.) refers to the need of gaining insights into what a listener does in L2 interaction, as a joint practice with the L2 speaker.

The above outlines a state of affairs that highlights the multidimensionality and complexity of impoliteness phenomena. My focus has been on pragmatic and discursive aspects in relation to interaction, situational factors, and contextual variability.

2   Theoretical framework

My position in this study is that *adult* learners of English as a foreign language, particularly if they use it for business purposes, need to be well aware of how they evaluate, produce, and represent impoliteness, both in their own L1 and in L2.[7] This involves being aware of how impolite expressions correspond to certain sets of norms, face-aggravating tactics, negative feelings, and strategic discursive constructs. Additionally, the adult EFL-BP learner need to accommodate that awareness of

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[7] I have not yet taken a position on the teaching of impoliteness to younger learners or for general purposes. For this audience, I have other concerns on such matter.

impoliteness of L1 together with the L2 they learn, as well as with the L2 it is actually used in particular situations and contexts.

Adult EFL-BP learners may feel limited when trying to communicate impoliteness in L2. As stated by Kramsch (1996), learners are looking for a "neutral" or "third" space as they try to express their own personal identity in a language not being their own. As a consequence, there may appear a perceived conflict between the practices of impoliteness in L1 and L2. However, the possibility of conflict in cross-cultural L1 and L2 impoliteness may also lead learners to develop their own patterns and practices of impolite use. Using Bourdieu's (1990) terminology, the extent to which an EFL-BP learner makes L1 and L2 interact will be in direct relation to the resources they can find in their own "habitus", which reflects the use of knowledge, experience, social structures, social action and social capital. Adult ELT learners of impoliteness should then be encouraged to resort to their own attitudes, values and ways of thinking in L1 and accommodate those to the realities they find on a daily basis at their workplaces or to the business purposes they have or want to achieve (Gerrard Mugford, 2008). The challenge is for teachers, who must ultimately reconcile these adult learners from following the patterns of impoliteness according to their own rules, standards, and practices and the ones found in specific (business, in our case) English contexts.

The theoretical framework I designed for this study responds to the main goal of exploring impoliteness phenomena as elicited data from different research instruments. What follows is an outline for this framework, starting from basic notions (such as "communication") to more complex ones (such as "impoliteness" itself). This will articulate, I hope, a background that accounts for the analytical and methodological decisions to be presented in the second part of this work, as well as for the terminology used throughout.

2.1   Communication, discourse, and communities

I assume that communication is a "purposeful interaction" (Allwood, 2007, p. 12) that responds to human needs (Bravo, 1998) and, as human, is conditioned by (para)linguistic, ideological, cultural, socio-psychological, discursive and productive/interpretative filters (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1997, pp. 20-29). I will refer to this process as an *activity* playing a role in a social level and according to, or for the enactment of, interlocutive roles (Allwood, 2000, p. 14)[8]. I believe that impoliteness is part of that purposeful construction, subject to the same filters in complex and simultaneous ways. My analytical interest emphasizes language skills, which entails socio-psychological and socio-cultural aspects that operate for communicative purposes. This determines (and is determined by) discourses emerging through those same purposes.

Whenever I use the terms "discourse" (or the attributive form "discursive"), I refer to any universe, complex, or formation resulting from (a) the sum of the text and its context (Lavandera, 1986), (b) the situational dataset required for the communication of a text and its context and the thematic and rhetorical constraints involved in the message inthe the (con)text (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1997a), and (c) cognitive, social, and historical practices (Foucault, 1971) "condensed" in, for example, attitudes, representations, and images that give rise to subjective "positions" ultimately determining what can and should be said during such practices (Maingueneau, 1980; Pêcheux, 1983[1990]). Impoliteness, then, is part of a discursive complex, made from textual, situational, and contextual material realized from certain ideological and subjective practices.

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[8] Allwood (1976, p. 48): "...by communicative activity will be meant any activity related to the sending or receiving of information from one agent to another and, by the communicative status of any such activity, will be meant the differences a sender and a receiver can exhibit in level of consciousness, type of intention and degree of acceptance with regard to the communicative activity."

It emerges from communicative interaction framed not only within a certain speech community with specific language and communication skills (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972), but also within a discourse community whose members share common goals achieved through certain communication systems, participation, and social identification (Swales, 2001, pp. 24-27). In a discourse community, information is exchanged using specific communicative resources (such as specialized vocabulary), which depends on certain practices and knowledge established by the members of such community and reproduced dynamically by newly ascribed members. These notions enable explanations of how a certain set of linguistic and communicative realizations may be considered impolite for a given speech community and, at the same time, incorporated as perfectly acceptable, and even as the expected "polite" choice, within the practices and specialized knowledge of a discourse community.[9]

Pragmatic values for impoliteness depend, then, not only on the speech community in which they build up their meanings, but also on the discourse community in which they circulate with different "social effects" (Bravo, 2008a, p. 260; Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1997b)[10]. The analytical distinction between *meaning* and *effect* aims at highlighting the importance of shared evaluations of pragmatic values, a process that, as Bakhtin/Voloshinov (1929[1992]) explained so clearly, is socially mediated. Throughout this study, then, I use the terms "interlocution" or "interlocutive process" to refer to the social mediation of communicative meanings, and "interlocutors" to the participants of such process. Given the written nature of the textual corpus under

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[9] As it is the case of teenage talk (Stenström, 2009; Stenström & Jörgensen, 2008; Stenström & Jørgensen, 2008; Zimmermann, 2003, 2005).

[10] It is important to consider the context of interpretation of the analysis to understand this meaning of "effect". While discussing the effects of mitigation ('atenuación') and mitigating speech acts, Bravo (2008, p 260) explains that: "Si del análisis surge que esas atenuaciones han logrado su objetivo de disminuir el efecto social negativo de esos actos, protegiendo o recreando las imágenes sociales de los interlocutores, entonces usamos el término *efecto social de cortesía*. Este efecto podrá ser también neutro o descortés, dependiendo de diversos factores contextuales, siendo el de mayor peso, la evaluación de los interlocutores del grado de conflicto interpersonal".

analysis (emails), I will specify the interlocutors between a *sender* and a *receiver*, which is part of an *audience*, as well.

2.2   *Face, facework, roles*

"Face" is a metaphor introduced by the American sociologist Goffman (1955) that describes those features of a communicative activity aimed at specifically acknowledging interlocutors' identity features based on socio-psychological perceptions of themselves for a social situation and a particular context (Ervin Goffman, 1959, 1967). The author systematizes the metaphor by defining it as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact", while the term line refers to "a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself" (Goffman, 1955, p. 213). Goffman's notion of *face* impacted profoundly the field of Pragmatics since Brown and Levinson (1987) associated it with politeness phenomena and described it according to "face threats" and "face-threatening acts". The analytical bias has been discussed extensively (see, for instance Bravo, 1998, 2003b), particularly the reductive view of politeness as avoiding or reducing face-threatening acts.

Face accounts for the social recognition of the other's positive self-image, including the interlocutors' own need of being respected (Ervin Goffman, 1974). According to Goffman (1967, p. 5), face is constituted by social values that an individual claims for him/herself in relation to other individuals. Communicative activities involving face specifically realize how interlocutors consider themselves and want to be considered by others, providing different "cues" during the interlocutive process. The dynamics of these communicative activities involving face is referred as

"facework"; that is, the manifested effort interlocutors make at building their relationships in different settings and preventing or diffusing conflict.

Following Zimmerman (1998), interlocutors adopts distinct roles during communicative interaction. These roles are configured and refer to the moment-by-moment dynamics of communication (for instance, an interlocutor who makes questions and other who answers them), as well as to more situational and socially established factors (such as police and suspect during an interrogation). The configuration of these roles respond to those values claimed by interlocutors according to the social order (Ervin Goffman, 1974) in which they find themselves part of, including expectations and accountability conditions emanating from that given order and claimed role.

2.3   Impoliteness, first and second order

According to the literature reviewed, it is very difficult to deny cross-cultural regularities making up the phenomena, tempting us to define impoliteness as the "shared form of *in*consideration for the other within a given culture", a deliberate reversal of Watt's (2003: 30) definition for politeness that we follow. This nutshell definition summarizes quite nicely the notion we wish to explain, but has the not so minor drawback of assuming a universalistic candor; that is, it considers that "being inconsiderate" is or should be the same from culture to culture. Several authors (Alcón-Soler, 2008; France, 1992; Fraser & Nolen, 1981; G Mugford, 2007; Gerrard Mugford, 2009; Schmidt, 1993) have already demonstrated that the actual practice of politeness through language varies greatly at pragmatic, discursive, and interactive levels with diverse social expressions, so there should be no exceptions for impoliteness, given its sociocultural specificity.

Following Watts (2003), first-order impoliteness (or "impoliteness$_1$") refers to the perceptions interlocutors have, or the evaluations they make, on communicative

behaviors, activities, or acts they consider as impolite, including how they think they achieve those. This is the main purpose of this study for Argentinian employees using or learning EFL-BP. In contrast, second-order impoliteness (or "impoliteness$_2$") refers to the theoretical constructs and interpretations researchers provide when analyzing the interlocutors' perceptions, evaluations, and achievement of communicative behaviors, activities, or acts considered as impolite. Both for first-order or second-order approaches to the study of impoliteness, the implicit common goal is the identification of structural features and potential cross-cultural comparisons.

Through this perspective, impoliteness results when certain communicative practices do not consider interactional norms and established standards approved for a particular text genre (such as work emails), which ultimately regulate the interlocutors' rights and obligations for an individual or social identity and from which face threats are realized and interpreted (Garcés-Conejos-Blitvich, 2010). In this sense, impoliteness is understood as a "negative identity practice" (Bucholtz, 1999; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005); that is, attributing a given subject position with the intention of claiming privileges over one of the interlocutors. In addition, impoliteness can sometimes function as a "brake" against certain communicative behaviors (see Martín-Rojo, 2000), as well as a trigger to aggression and violence (Bolívar, 2003b, 2005c; Bravo, 2008c). Impoliteness has ideological and strategic values that enable interlocutors to *coerce*, *oppose*, and *delegitimize* (Bolívar, 2005, p. 280)[11], which may surface particularly in asymmetric communication.

For this study, then, impoliteness is identified according to any of the four notions sketched on Table 1 and already reviewed in the previous section.

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[11] As analyzed in political discourse by different other authors (Blas-Arroyo, 2005; P. Chilton, 1990; Paul Chilton, 1997, 2004; Flores-Treviño, 2010; Illie, 2001, 2007; Mapelli, 2010).

IMPOLITENESS₂			
Dimension	**Descriptor**	**Description**	**Authors**
Normativity	**Lacking of**	A rule, maxim, or principle	R. T. Lakoff, 1989; George Leech, 1983; Geoffrey Leech, 2007
		Face wants, politic behaviors, or conversational contracts.	P. Brown & Levinson, 1987; Fraser, 1990; Watts, 1989
		Mutual commitment	Kaul-de-Marlangeon, 2010
Interactivity	**Aggravating**	Face, facework	Culpeper, 1996, 2005; Culpeper et al., 2008
		Aggression, attack	Derek Bousfield, 2007; D. Bousfield, 2007
		Harm	Bernal, 2008b
Affectivity	**Opposing**	Behaviors, interpersonal relations	Kienpointner, 2008a, 2008b
		Identity practice	Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2010; Garcés-Conejos-Blitvich, 2009
		Socio-emotional features	Bravo, 2003a, 2008b
Rationality	**Strategizing**	Interlocutive evaluations of behaviors	R. Arundale, 2006; Robert B. Arundale, 1999; Terkourafi, 2003, 2004
		Discursive constructions, assessments	Bolívar, 2003a, 2005a, 2005b
		Discursive operations with ideological values	Blas-Arroyo, 2005; Paul Chilton, 1997, 2004; Illie, 2001, 2007

Table 1. Second-order impoliteness research

PART II - STUDYING IMPOLITENESS

3   Purpose of the study and research questions

Teaching pragmatics provides EFL learners increased pragmatic accuracy and more discursive appropriateness for certain communicative situations, thus positively impacting certain affective factors, such as anxiety and stress levels (Alcón, 2005; Alcón-Soler, 2002, 2008, in press; Martínez-Flor & Soler, 2007; Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan, 2008; Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006; Uso-Juan & Martinez-Flor, 2007). Following the same line of argumentation, if impoliteness is considered a key pragmatic component of communication and another driver of language proficiency, then teaching impoliteness would provide an extra language resource for adult learners of EFL-BP targeting the improvement of their language skills at the multilingual and multicultural workplace.

3.1   Purpose of the study

In this study, I research how Argentinian advanced users and adult learners of English as a Foreign Language for Business Purposes (EFL-BP) represent and evaluate impoliteness at their workplace when interacting by email with U.S. American teammates or managers. The purpose of doing this is to present empirically based pragmatic and discursive notions of first-order impoliteness that may enable the advancement towards a pedagogic discussion of the teachability of impoliteness in the EFL-BP classroom.

3.2   Research questions

Based on the above, a distinctive set of research questions guide the study:

- What intuitive notions and perceptions of impoliteness do Argentinian users and learners of EFL-BP have at their workplace? How are these notions and perceptions of impoliteness related to other notions, such as negativity and conflict? How are these reflected in emails?

- How is impoliteness phenomena evaluated and represented at the workplace by Argentinian users and adult learners of EFL-BP when interacting by email with U.S American users of English as a first language?

- What Argentinian evaluations and representations of impoliteness are confirmed by U.S. American employees have when communicating with Argentinian colleagues and employees?

3.3   Rationale

According to the literature reviewed, impoliteness is socioculturally configured, realized through communicative devices that can be approached pragmatically and discursively. Thus, it may be suggested that Argentinian adult users and learners of EFL-BP resort to their L1 knowledge to perceive/evaluate, produce/represent impoliteness. This is particularly true when having to achieve professional tasks at the workplace with U.S. American counterparts, including assigning responsibilities on an issue, evaluating the performance of a colleague, and refusing work-related assignments. These situations are dependent on different sociocultural factors, all of which has linguistic and discursive realizations.

From this, I consider that questions addressing the evaluations and representations of first-order impoliteness are valid for programmatic research

initiatives in the field. The study would encompass what Alcón Soler (in press) identifies as the first step in a pedagogic design that involves the teaching of pragmatic content: the identification of the pragmatic item in interaction.

4 Methods and procedures

This study is exploratory, qualitative, and interpretative in nature (DuFon, 2001; Strauss, 1987), grounded on natural, elicited, and case datasets (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1992). The evaluations and representations of impoliteness proceed from a discursive content analysis of constructed data obtained from a questionnaire and a discourse completion test research instruments. The evaluations and representations of impoliteness are then contrasted with U.S. Americans working with Argentinians, particularly by email, through the use of semi-structured interviews.

I conducted this research during April and July 2012.

4.1 Settings

This study is administered in three Argentinian subsidiaries of transnational U.S. American companies with offices in Buenos Aires and in which *lingua franca* is English. All of these subsidiaries offer English language training benefits for their employees wishing to improve their foreign language proficiency.

4.2 Participants

To gather the natural corpus of corporate email sequences, I contacted five informants with whom I had previous professional involvement. From them, I requested emails in which they considered that "negative situations, conflict, or impoliteness" were at play, including "inappropriateness, aggression, and violence". I did not involve

the informants providing these materials in later stages of the research. Due permissions, anonymity, and non-traceability conditions hold for them.

For the questionnaire and the discourse completion test administration, I invited Argentinian users and advanced learners of EFL-BP, currently working or having been worked with U.S. Americans. I obtained 22 responses after filtering results with the following criteria:

Involve Argentinian participants that:

1. Are holding (or held in the last three years) a position in a work environment where Spanish and/or English are used to carry on business or work tasks.

2. Are exchanging (or exchanged in the last three years) emails or interacting with U.S. American employees.

3. Are formal or informal EFL learners, taking EFL classes or actively seeking to improve their English language proficiency.

For the semi-structured interviews, I contacted fifteen U.S. American employees from one U.S. Company with offices in Buenos Aires, which I have been involved professionally with. After ensuring that the U.S. Americans were working or have worked with Argentinians on a daily basis, I interviewed 10 of those contacts.

Informants and interviewees are, thus, first-degree contacts (in other words, people with whom I have been professionally involved), while participants are second-degree ones (that is, referred contacts). It is important to note that informants, participants, and interviewees were never involved in any teaching intervention of mine and, also, they were not direct reports to me in the workplaces they belonged to. All participants were employees with different responsibilities at their companies and teams, including analysts, team leaders, and project managers. In sections §5.1 and §7.1,

I provide detailed information on the socio-demographics of Argentinian participants and U.S. American interviewees, respectively.

4.3   Materials: data and instruments

For this study, I used three closely related research materials. These materials derive from an exploration of two email sequences selected from the natural corpus. These sequences are useful to provide pragmatic and interactive insights on the communicative activities involved in negative or conflictive activities leading to impoliteness. Based on this, I then designed and administered a questionnaire and a discourse completion test (DCT). With these instruments, my purpose is to elicit possible realizations of first-order impoliteness. Following the same line, I interviewed U.S. Americans to elicit their professional experiences (narratives) when working with Argentinians. I describe in greater detail the data and instruments used in what follows.

4.3.1   Natural data: email sequences

As mentioned, the departure point of this research is email sequences provided by Argentinian informants recalling negative or conflictive situations in which "impoliteness, inappropriateness, rudeness, aggression, or violence" took place. Informants agreeing to disclose their emails accounted for the conflictive situations they experienced through the texts I present in the Supplementary Materials accompanying this study. These emails are part of a corpus of natural data, with the following characteristics (the identification of the sequences is mine, such as "Today"):

CORPUS OF WORKPLACE EMAILS			
Sequences	Words	Emails	Audience
1 Today	566	4	12
2 The Survey	687	3	2
3 A Larger Issue	983	8	8
4 The Vacation Request	373	4	4
5 The Calibration	1465	20	8
Totals	4074	39	24

Table 2. Primary corpus of workplace emails

This primary corpus of workplace emails is gathered from informants from the same company, but involving different departments, teams, and employees. To understand the dynamics of the emails in this first moment of the corpus, it is necessary to consider the positions and roles of senders, receivers, and audience in the organization, as it is represented in Figure 1:
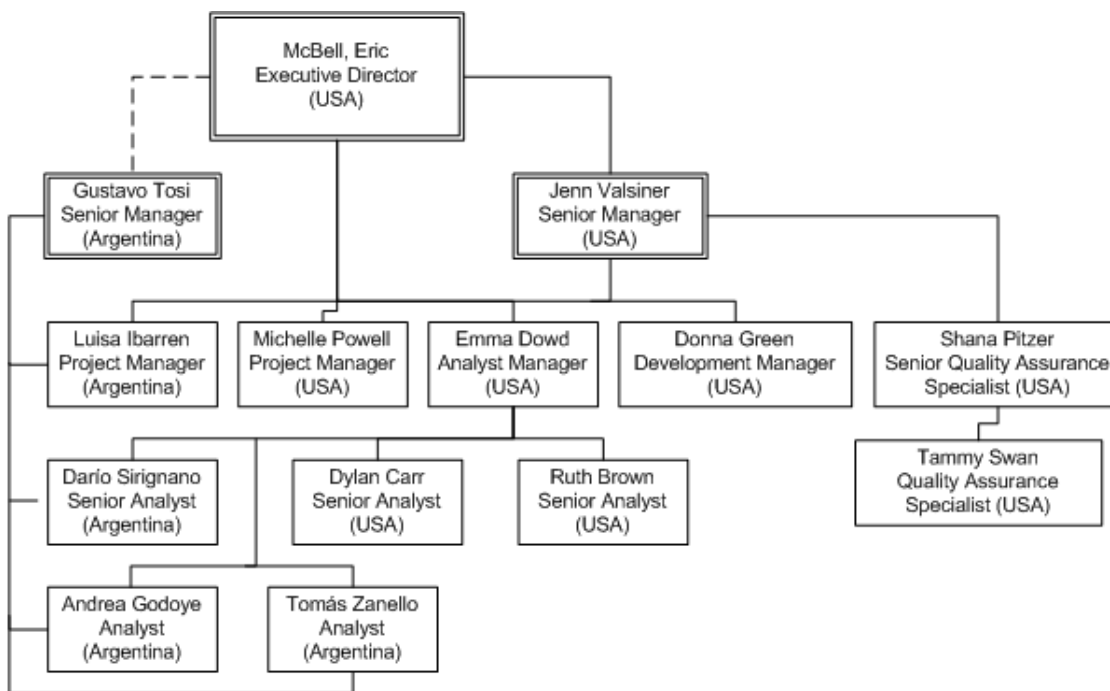
Figure 1. Generic organization chart referred in the email corpus

The chart is "generic" in the sense that involves many people for the same position during different time lapses, in which organizational re-structures occurred. The chart also provides an overview of the relative power and social distance between interlocutors. From this corpus, I selected two sequences for the purposes and scope of this study. The selection was motivated by the degree of conflict informed and the consequences reported at their workplaces, as I describe below (see Appendix A). From these two email sequences I base the design of the research instruments.

In Sequence 1: Today, Michelle Powell is a U.S. American project manager requesting José Hill, an Argentinian manager, to provide information regarding some processes and procedures created by his team. This information is crucial to complete the required tasks for the ongoing project, which involves adding value to the knowledgebase of the company. This sequence occurs within a situation in which José Hill's team members are involved in a process of severance and in which knowledge transfer from individuals to the company is at stake. Michelle Powell requests the Argentinian manager to fully collaborate with her team members (two other projects managers from the USA, and two analysts from Argentina, Darío Sirignano and Andrea Godoye) by providing them all necessary information. A few months before this sequence occurred, Andrea Godoye had previously overshadowed José Hill's team *in situ*, so as to observe and get first-hand information.

In Sequence 2: The Vacation Request, the Argentinian analyst Andrea Godoye informs her U.S. senior manager, Jenn Valsiner, the dates of her vacation period, according to local laws and regulations. Andrea had already obtained an approval from her Argentinian senior manager, Gustavo Tosi, and from Human Resources, so informing the U.S. counterpart was considered an administrative procedure to organize ongoing project work. This email sequence occurred a few months after the same U.S. manager had not approved a paid time-off request from Andrea on occasion of her birthday, a non-binding corporate benefit for employees that had been customarily approved without further issues within the same team. This exceptional request denial caused great distress to Andrea.

4.3.2   Questionnaire

A questionnaire (see Appendix B) was administered to Argentinian participants was in Spanish and through an online platform. This questionnaire aims at gathering

data on language use, intercultural needs, and use of emails to communicate negative situations at the workplace. I also produced a paper-based version to facilitate access to those participants without Internet access or uncomfortable with the electronic environment. Figure 2 displays the look and feel of the online questionnaire[12]:

Figure 2. Screenshot of the questionnaire (online version)

The design of this questionnaire is partially based on Evans and Green (2003) and Barbara et al. (1996) for the roles and uses of Spanish and English at the workplace, with a focus on the frequency with which participants need to read and write various types of texts for professional purposes. It is also partially based on Speedy (2003) and Russell et al. (2007) for gathering information on participants' intercultural needs, as well as their use of emails in English, particularly under negative situations o to communicate potentially conflictive acts. In this questionnaire, participants are also requested to self-evaluate their level of written English, for which I follow the level

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[12] Available at https://edice.org/estudios (link retrieved the 31st august 2012).

descriptors for written language skills from the Common European Framework for Languages (2001), with my changes in phrasing to reflect common work tasks.

The questionnaire includes five distinct sections:

a. Basic socio-demographic details, such as age, gender, and level of studies

b. English language proficiency information based on the source and manner of instruction and a self-assessment of written skills and needs

c. Work-related information related to professional industry and area, position, seniority, and direct report

d. Email usage at the workplace, including frequency and related work performance issues, as well narratives of conflictive situations

e. Notions of first-order impoliteness

The last two sections relate directly to the main goal of eliciting perceptions and evaluations of impoliteness from the workplace, requesting the questionnaire participants to report on their common beliefs and perceptions of what communicative activity they think constitute impoliteness. To elicit this information, the questionnaire builds from "negativity", then to "conflict", and arrives to different concepts that could potentially involve or constitute "impoliteness", derived from the literature review (see §1 above). Apart from open questions directly requesting participants to elaborate on their ides of impoliteness, I also provide closed options for them to choose from, which constitute *attributive semantic sets* (Turnage, 2007) related to face-threatening activities, organized intuitively according to a perceived degree of intensity, as follows[13]:

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[13] The semantic sets are provided in Spanish: "adverso / desfavorable / negativo; inapropiado / impropio / fuera de lugar; desatento / desconsiderado / irrespetuoso; grosero / ordinario / vulgar; hiriente / molesto / hostigador; ofensivo / provocativo / insultante; amenazante / conflictivo / intimidante; violento / hostil / agresivo".

I. adverse / unfavorable / negative

II. inappropriate / unsuitable / out of place

III.

- careless / inconsiderate / disrespectful

- gross / ordinary / common

IV.

- hurtful / annoying / harassing

- offensive / provocative / insulting

- threatening / confrontational / intimidating

- violent / hostile / aggressive

These sets serve the purpose of approximate participants' notions of impoliteness within given descriptors stemming from the literature. In a way, these closed options also aim at identifying the preferred expressions for first-order notions impoliteness.

4.3.3 Discourse completion test

The main goal of the discourse completion test (DCT, see Appendix C) is for Argentinian participants to further elaborate on their first-order notions of impoliteness when confronted with specific scenarios. The DCT requested participants to evaluate key email contributions from the sequences presented above (§4.3.1), replicating the same dynamics as found in the questionnaire. The scenario descriptions largely keep the situational information, but some details were emphasized to more clearly focus on the negativity or conflict of the situation, as reported originally by participants. The names have been changed again as presented in the email sequences from the Supplementary Materials to further secure anonymity and non-traceability conditions.

Notice that the DCT request participants to write emails in response to the scenarios, but these results are out of the scope of the present study. Despite this, I include the responses in the Supplementary Materials document for reference purposes.

4.3.4   Semi-structured interviews

For contrast purposes, and following key questions from the questionnaire in §4.3.2, I administered a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix D) to U.S. American employees. Before the interview, I sent invitations listing questions, requesting permissions to publish responses, and scheduling a follow-up phone meeting. Due to privacy concerns, I did not record the interviews. Participants could also answer the questions in written if they wished.

When appropriate, the interviews also focused on "personal narratives" to elicit passages of impolite communicative activities, providing participants with opportunities to develop their experience on how those passages were managed. Due to the scope of this study and the resources available, I did not produce transcriptions of the interviews, but took down notes representing the responses given for each of the question.

4.4   Scope and limitations

This study is centered on the representation and evaluation of first-order, notions of impoliteness in work contexts in Argentina (Buenos Aires City) and the United States of America (Denver), with a focus on email sequences and the required written and work skills to produce them in English as a Foreign Language for Business Purposes. I exclude in my analysis other English language skills and knowledge.

Due to the number of participants involved, this research can be considered a case analysis and does not pretend to overgeneralize conclusions. When referring to "Argentinians" and "U.S. Americans" I refer only to those individuals participating in

the study. A broader study involving a more profound involvement of the U.S. American participants would be necessary.

I am interested in analyzing certain discursive features that may characterize first-order impoliteness and that would be profitable for pedagogic and teaching purposes. Broad inter- and intra-cultural considerations are beyond the scope of this study. Also, I limit my project to providing some insights for the teaching of impoliteness phenomena in the classroom, not a systematic pedagogic design or a language teaching approach or method. Pedagogic designs and classroom interventions applying knowledge on impoliteness would require a broader research project.

PART III – REPRESENTING AND EVALUATING IMPOLITENESS

5 Argentinian representations of impoliteness

In this section, I present and discuss the results obtained from the questionnaire administered to Argentinian participants. First, I provide an overview of participants' socio-demographic details, then I specifically refer to their EFL proficiency self-assessment, and finally I go at greater lengths on the negativity and conflict representations and their evaluations of first-order impoliteness.

5.1 *Participants*

All participants (n=22) are Argentinians living in the City of Buenos Aires. Most of them completed the questionnaire online and only a few (n=2) a paper-based version. Participants are evenly distributed between females (n=10) and males (n=12), with the age range of 26-35 strongly represented. Most of them have some degree of post-secondary studies, frequently at university level (n=18). In Table 1, I organize these basic socio-demographic details.

	Count	Percentage
Gender		
Female (F)	10	45.45%
Male (M)	12	54.55%
Age		
18-25 (1)	4	18.18%
26-35 (2)	13	59.09%
36-45 (3)	2	9.09%
46-55 (4)	2	9.09%
56-65 (5)	1	4.55%

Studies		
Secondary	1	4.55%
Tertiary	3	13.64%
University - Complete	9	40.91%
University - Incomplete	9	40.91%

Table 3. Argentinian participants' basic socio-demographic information

Regarding their professional activities, all Argentinian participants are qualified employees at bilingual Spanish-English office workplaces, interacting daily with American counterparts by phone, videoconference, or email. They work for the private sector in two main industries: Services (n=16) and Information Technology (n=6). The areas and positions reported fall within the Human Resources, Technology, and Management areas, with a strong presence of low and middle-management positions:

- Human Resources: SAP MM Consultant, IT Recruiter

- Training: Teacher, Trainer, Instructional Designer

- Customer Service: Operator, Consultant

- Technology: AES Backbone Engineer

- Graphic Design: Designer, Media Specialist

- Management: Project Coordinator, Project Manager, Project Assistant, Product Manager, Director, Director of Security, Security Supervisor

Participants' positions indicate responsibilities dealing with knowledge and technology development, as well as management of resources and security. The average position seniority is of 2,5 years (with a range from 7 years to 2 years), with direct reports in Argentina (n=12), the USA (n=6), or a double direct report in both countries (n=4).

5.2   EFL-BP proficiency and email usage

Most participants (n=20) are current users of Spanish and English at their workplaces. The remaining ones (n=2) inform having used English in previous

positions. The distribution for the sources of English language knowledge is evenly, with formal instruction slightly differentiated. As a highlight, Argentinians identify their workplaces as a source of English language instruction (n=9, 40.91%) and some are presently taking formal classes of English at work (n=2). In addition, many report having passed at least one international exam of English proficiency (n=14).

Most participants (n=20) self-assess their English language written skills as an enablement to do their professional tasks without further issues. The common reference level descriptor for this part of the survey is the level C1/C2 for writing (Europe, 2001). In Table 2, I provide more details concerning the participant's English language instruction and written skills self-assessment.

	Count	Percentage
Source of English Language Studies		
Language institute	10	45.45%
High school	8	36.36%
With a private teacher	9	40.91%
At work	9	40.91%
On my own, self -study	7	31.82%
Other	2	9.09%
English Language Proficiency Self-Assessment: Written Skills		
Yes, I can do this without issues.	14	63.64%
I can do this most of the times.	6	27.27%
This is difficult for me. I need help.	1	4.55%
This is very difficult for me. I need a lot of help.	1	4.55%
No, I can't do this. It's way too difficult.	0	0.00%

Table 4. Sources of English language knowledge and self-assessment

When informing about their language needs or actions for improvements, only half of the total number of participants (n=9) consider that they need to continue improving their English language proficiency, particularly to perceive and produce negative attitudes, if necessary. These needs refer to a wider range of vocabulary and grammar structures, fluency, pronunciation, strategies for expressing oneself "without

offense", and cultural contents[14]. The same problem language areas are also noted by Frank (2000, p. 52) when researching non-native English speakers communicating in American medical workplaces. As such, the use of specialized vocabulary, fluency, and pragmatic and cultural knowledge seem to be a shared concern by EFL learners in professional settings.

Participants inform (n=20) currently exchanging emails with American employees, a task that occupies at least 50% of their time (n=17). The communicative activities performed through email ranges different types of work tasks, mostly procedural and organizational activities within a team for organizing and accomplishing common goals with members of a team. These activities refer strictly to work-related tasks, including (see the Supplementary Materials document):

- Project-related processes: assignments, due dates, approvals

- Information requests

- Status reports

- Client and sponsor communication

The responses hint to work and communicative asymmetries in completing tasks coming from American direct reports, including receiving and processing work orders, reporting progress, informing status, and escalating to superiors. The activities accomplished with the type of emails sent or received are aligned to the ones reported by Russell et al. (2007, p. 1826), but the range in my questionnaire is limited to accomplishing job or project-related tasks. There was not a single response referring to the use of emails for other communicative activities, such as socializing or providing

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[14] Responses in Spanish: "[1] Vocabulario, gramatica escrita. [3] Casi siempre terminó utilizando el inglés pero la "idea" parte de mi estructura en mi lengua madre. [5] Más que nada fluidez, y vocabulario específico para el litigio. [6] Más que nada, gramática. [14] Expresar estados de ànimo o cuestiones subjetivas, y quedarme tranquila de que expresè exactamente lo que deseaba. [15] ampliar vocabulario, modos de escrituras mas formales para poder expresar el descontento sin generar rechazo en el otro. [16] Conocer más de la cultura inglesa y de los usos y practicas sociales [17] Pronunciación y vocabuario [21] Estar mas tiempo en US."

personal information. Phatic communication (Chen, 2003) is not characteristic of the emails participants send or receive, but is delimited by the congruency and appropriateness (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007, p. 75) of the institutional discourse participants are subject to.

This identification of email usage stresses the transactional-procedural nature of this type of written interaction as participants' official, on-the-record, means of communication. Contrary to some of Russell's findings (2007, p. 1833), participants in this questionnaire do not find emails as *interruptive* to their work dynamics, but rather *regulatory* of their workload and *evaluative* of their performance. For the speech community represented in the questionnaire, emails should be regarded as the expression of a highly institutionalized means for written communication (Chen, 2006), unrelated to linguistic and stylistic features characteristic of spoken interaction (Baron, 2003), and where asymmetric relationships are recognized, established, and sustained through clearly defined roles and obligations within a multinational organization (Cameron, 2003).

5.3   Negativity and conflict in emails

Two questions form part of the first set of research questions guiding this study:

- How are these notions and perceptions of impoliteness related to other notions, such as negativity and conflict?

- How are these reflected in emails?

Through the questionnaire, participants report communicative difficulties associated to three broad areas: (i) processes glitches for getting something done, (ii) transactional failures in reports, and (iii) social and cultural misunderstandings. Because of the strong association between workload and email, it comes as no surprise that these

areas are clearly at the crossroads of work, communication, and language, as I list below (see Supplementary Materials)[15]:

Procedural

- Explaining tasks
- Aligning work expectations
- Delegating or reassigning tasks
- Managing crisis situations
- Explaining local administrative procedures (from Argentina)

Transactional/Interactional

- Receiving inadequate responses, examples
- Conveying abstract ideas
- Expressing moods or personal situations

Intercultural

- Dealing with inaccuracies, vagueness, contradictions, and ambiguity
- Understanding idioms, informal or popular expressions
- Making jokes

As Evans (2012, p. 206) discusses, the interplay between written and oral forms seem to be embedded in work emails, although some form stronger than the other at any moment of the interaction. The communicative difficulties identified in the questionnaire uncover the relationship between highly standardized institutional emails and the need of incorporating features of spoken communication. This is not only directly expressed through pragmatic language demands ("making jokes"), but also in more procedural ("explaining") and transactional ("conveying ideas") or interactional ("expressing moods") activities. Participants recognize emails as being *embedded* (Evans, 2012, p. 206) in broader, mostly spoken, communicative situations: their syndicated difficulties may signal the need of further pragmalinguistic and

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[15] I systematize in this list references to email communication.

sociopragmatic English language resources to switch from one form to the other or to keep consistency in producing the demanded preferred form (Gimenez, 2006).

Communication and language difficulties may lead to missed business opportunities or a decrease in work performance. Some participants (n=7) inform about particular cases where insufficient English language knowledge and inadequate or scant intercultural knowledge affected business (see Supplementary Materials). Again, the responses indicated struggles when setting objectives and communicating the urgency for completing a task or describing its complexity. Participants noted that the necessary English language proficiency impact revenue generating initiatives (such as managing American client requests) when specific intercultural knowledge is insufficient for specialized activities, such as presenting or selling a product or rejecting a client request. When requested to recall an inadequate use of emails at the workplace, responses (n=7) referred to the expected accounts of language use in its lexical and grammatical aspects, as well as more pragmatic-related and other paralinguistic items, including (see Supplementary Materials):

- Misuse or misinterpretations of work-related specialized language

- Negative language interferences from Spanish

- Inaccurate opening salutations

- Misaddressing receivers

As already noticeable, participants' concerns with their English language use involve lexical proficiency at different levels, acknowledging the negative interferences from Spanish as the expression of certain impossibility of, or inaccessibility to, situated vocabulary. Email openings and closings have been under the attention for analysts as an indication of the constructed relationship between the sender and its audience, where factors such as relative status, distance, and gender are at stake (Bou-Franch, 2011;

Clyne, 2009; Waldvogel, 2007). The careful selection of both direct and indirect receivers in emails is a skill that is particularly salient at work: it is part of a strategic *audience design* that serves different purposes, most notably knowledge circulation, identity positioning, and social control (Skovholt & Svennevig, 2006, pp. 60-63). In this regard, participants confirm that addressing the wrong receivers is something consider as a mistake or incorrect.

Work performance issues related to English language proficiency seem to be partially reflected in the potentially negative or conflictive communicative acts participants consider they produce in their emails. The questionnaire focused on five acts: *reproaching, complaining, refusing, ordering, criticizing, disagreeing,* and *blaming*[16]. All of these acts are quite complex and have been extensively studied in the literature (consult Barron, 2003, pp. 30-34)[17]. The purpose of presenting these acts in the questionnaire is for participants to hint possible types and frequencies of email negativity from a holistic perspective derived from professional experience. Thus, the focus is to elicit the possibility of producing those acts or being involved in such activities. Considering the asymmetric nature of communication, the figures in Table 5 and Table 6 below are the expected ones. *Blaming* is the least favored act (n=14), followed by *reproaching*, *refusing*, and *complaining*. The acts most favored, and with comparatively more distributed ranges, are *disagreeing*, *ordering*, and *criticizing*.

Communicative Acts in Emails (1/2)								
Options	Reproach		Complain		Refuse		Order	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Always	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	4.76%
Frequently	1	4.76%	1	4.76%	2	9.52%	3	14.29%
Sometimes	0	0.00%	1	4.76%	2	9.52%	5	23.81%

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[16] Admittedly, the selected acts are not mutually exclusive: for instance, it may be argued that *reproaching* and *blaming* may conform a single complex act, as well as *accusing* might.

[17] According to our review, *blaming* and *reproaching* is still understudied; with some notable exceptions (Garcia, 2009; Laforest, 2009; Lehtimaja, 2011; Pomerantz, 1978).

Not very often	3	14.29%	1	4.76%	2	9.52%	3	14.29%
Rarely	6	28.57%	9	42.86%	5	23.81%	1	4.76%
Never	10	47.62%	8	38.10%	9	42.86%	7	33.33%
No answer	1	4.76%	1	4.76%	1	4.76%	1	4.76%

Table 5. Communicative acts in emails (1/2)

Communicative Acts in Emails (2/2)						
Options	**Criticize**		**Disagree**		**Blame**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Always	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Frequently	3	14.29%	4	19.05%	1	4.76%
Sometimes	1	4.76%	4	19.05%	1	4.76%
Not very often	4	19.05%	3	14.29%	1	4.76%
Rarely	5	23.81%	6	28.57%	3	14.29%
Never	7	33.33%	3	14.29%	14	66.67%
No answer	1	4.76%	1	4.76%	1	4.76%

Table 6. Communicative acts in emails (2/2)

The results from the selected communicative acts seem to find a parallel with conflictive or negative situations participants recognize as such. I present these answers in five groups, as follows:

General Negative Situations

- Replying to an inappropriate comment
- Apologizing for a previous email
- Give/announce bad news

Administrative Breaches

- Communicating possible breach of labor conditions
- Requesting salary raises

Escalations

- Escalating situations that involve conflict of interests
- Providing negative feedback of a direct report

Making Accountable

- Reporting missed deliverable dates as a risk and escalated to managers
- Reporting security situations
- Informing about mistakes, inadequacy of processes and procedures

Explaining Misses

- Providing long explanations to account for failed expectations, project complications, or missed dates
- Rejecting an idea
- Explaining why an idea was accepted over another one
- Arguing for or against a given analysis with other teams involved

General conflictive or negative situations through emails include expected responses that position participants in antagonizing positions (replying to an inappropriate comment) or submissive ones (apologizing, giving "bad news"). I also expected situations involving administrative established or new states of affairs (breach of labor conditions, salary requests) and reporting unproductive items (deliverables, tasks, mistakes). Less expected responses involve escalating low work performances or issues (conflict of interests, negative feedback) and providing explanations (failed expectations, rejecting ideas, backing up analysis). These responses put the figures for *blaming*, *reproaching*, *refusing*, and *complaining* in Table 5 and Table 6 under a different light.

In turn, when asked if participants find negative attitudes from their American counterparts or superiors, the positive answers are few (n=6), but descriptive enough to illustrate different degrees of negative attitudes leading to conflict (see Supplementary Materials):

Language

- Unwillingness to communicate with non-native speakers of English
- Inadequate communication related to uncommon acronyms or jargon
- Vulgar sense of humor
- Constant irony or sarcasm
- Expressing frustration or anger
- Making xenophobic or racist comments

Work

- Delegating tasks off the record
- Doing an inadequate analysis of task complexity and completion dates
- Complaining before getting informed about a situation
- Avoiding a task alleging incompetency or not within their job description
- Mistreating, criticizing, or belittling work and employees

It is worth highlighting from these responses the emphasis on the sustained character of the negative attitude in focus, which may lead to ongoing conflictive communication or particular work situations far from ideal. For example, the response referring to the unwillingness to communicate due to employees being non-native speakers of English are the result of progressive and summative cues underlying shared beliefs or business practices, rather than single occurrences of the attitude reported (such as the use of jargon or unknown acronyms).

5.4   Notions of first-order impoliteness

The research question "What intuitive notions and perceptions of impoliteness do Argentinian users and learners of EFL-BP have at their workplace?" is reformulated through the questionnaire as "how is or would be something or someone 'impolite' at work". The purpose of this open question is to request Argentinian participants to elaborate their own (emic) notions of impoliteness resulting from their professional experiences (see Supplementary Materials). This item in the questionnaire received a variety of responses that illustrated negative attitudes, uncooperativeness, and conflict, mostly through insults, criticisms, and non-verbal language. Oftentimes, these notions overlap with the responses already given (§5.3), but add, to my opinion, a higher degree of conflict so that it encompasses communicative acts closely related to violence. References to communicate acts or activities deemed violent are most clearly evident in

this part of the questionnaire. Closely related to this, as it is emphasized throughout, is the identification of distinct degrees of imposition of the work task, with a clear differentiation between "assigning" and "ordering". Participants also refer to normative breakdowns of communication when a given act, activity, behavior, or attitude is not recognized as being within the shared set of norms, manners, policies, or codes at the organization. These are, more often than not, considered *at least* as inappropriate, and may include situational chronemic features (such as tardiness).

As it becomes readily evident in a work context, Argentinian participants also relate impoliteness to the disregard of special labor conditions, circumstances, professional claims, and personal feelings, particularly when tasks do not achieve completion, standards, or expectations. Participants inform about communicative acts that result in inattentiveness or lack of recognition for efforts and results when an individual successfully completes tasks in a timely and adequate manner, particularly when enduring adverse conditions. The distinction is made here between lack of consideration when employees are unsuccessful and lack of recognition when they succeed, an interpersonal and professional balance that target management superiors directly. Related to this, and interestingly enough, participants also mention unequal evaluations of work performance or tasks, associating notions of impoliteness with those of unfairness or biased equity.

Elaborating from the responses provided in this question, I associate the notion of impoliteness with five main features: *aggressiveness*, *imperativeness*, *inappropriateness*, *inconsiderateness*, *heedlessness*, and *unfairness*. With the exceptions of *imperativeness* and *heedlessness*, the other ones are found in the semantic sets provided a closed conceptualization of impoliteness. The corresponding realizations for

each characteristic are listed as follow, some of them already mentioned in the previous section (§6.3):

Aggressiveness

- Insults, criticisms
- Reproaches, blaming
- Interruptions
- Too informal verbal and non-verbal language, harassment
- A person who does not listen (narrow-minded)
- Aggressive written language

Imperativeness

- Orders
- Ordering instead of assigning work

Inappropriateness

- Being disrespectful in communicative manners
- Someone or something invasive, out of place, rude, distant, moody
- Boast of knowing everything
- Referring to inappropriate topics
- Lack of education and appropriateness
- Shouting
- Tardiness

Inconsiderateness

- Being judgmental before consulting
- Not considering opinions
- Assign lack of professionalism
- Lack of respect or consideration
- Lack of consideration for personal situations or motivations

Heedlessness

- Ignoring the other
- Not recognizing efforts or work done
- Being disrespectful for the work done

- Someone who does not respect the time and dedication at work

Unfairness

- Not assuming mistakes
- Not being objective when facing conflict

It is important to note that the above listed features of impoliteness may easily fall within one broader category or may entail each other, such as *imperativeness* already assumed in either *aggressiveness* or *inappropriateness*. What remains important, however, is that, by presenting these features, I try to categorize their salience in participants' responses. Thus, for example, imperativeness is such a recurrent feature when participants describe first-order impoliteness that it stood significant enough to differentiate it from the rest.

Other researchers focusing on native speakers of Spanish also report some of the five characteristics for impoliteness listed above. In her questionnaire to speakers of Peninsular Spanish, Bernal (2007, p. 189) notes three workplace situations in which participants observe impoliteness, may be aligned to the suggested features of impoliteness above: (i) arguing against a colleague in a meeting (inappropriateness), (ii) impose criteria (imperativeness), (iii) when the boss ignores the employees (heedlessness).[18] In an academic professional environment, Haugh (2010, pp. 20-21) discusses a case of conflictive email exchanges between an Australian university instructor and a foreign learner in which inappropriateness and aggressiveness are common denominators resulting from online evaluations of third parties disapproving the email sequences made public. In my questionnaire, when participants are requested to specify their notions of impoliteness in relation to their American counterparts (see Supplementary Materials), the responses replicate the ones listed above. There is one

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[18] The original responses in Spanish are: "19) Quitarle la razón a un colega en una reunión. 20) Imponer criterios. 21) Cuando el jefe ningunea a los empleados" (Bernal, 2007, p. 189).

exception, though: Argentinian participants relate impoliteness with *being evasive* with their U.S. American partners. *Evasiveness* is realized through the following communicative activities:

Evasiveness

- Being indirect, vague, unclear
- Circumlocuting
- Failing to report or inform

The results from the closed emic notions of impoliteness organized in Table 7 below display a clear tendency to favor the *careless / inconsiderate / disrespectful* (n=18) and the *inappropriate / unsuitable / out of place* (n=15) semantic sets, which would correspond to communicative activities involving inconsiderateness, heedlessness, and inappropriateness, according to my description above. Participants' preference for the rest of the sets decreases according to the degree of conflict or face attack, a selection that may hint towards their dissociation with impoliteness. The *adverse / unfavorable / negative* set is an exception to this tendency: it was the least favored of all options (n=6).

Semantic Set	Count	Percentage
adverse / unfavorable / negative	6	27.27%
inappropriate / unsuitable / out of place	15	68.18%
careless / inconsiderate / disrespectful	18	81.82%
gross / ordinary / common	12	54.55%
hurtful / annoying / harassing	9	40.91%
offensive / provocative / insulting	12	54.55%
threatening / confrontational / intimidating	9	40.91%
violent / hostile / aggressive	10	45.45%
Other	0	0.00%

Table 7. Emic notions of impoliteness (closed)

The closed emic notions of impoliteness on Table 7 above display an interesting pattern of selected choices that deserves further research: it seems to indicate that the

notion of impoliteness admits or is closer to higher degrees of perceived violence. The preferred set of semantic options is "careless / inconsiderate / disrespectful", but all the other options were syndicated as representing impoliteness as well.

5.5   Implications

The results presented and discussed above may orient EFL researchers and teachers into further studies on impoliteness within Argentinian speech and discourse communities. Some basic implications would involve the following:

- The Argentinian workplace involves highly trained employees who have attained an advanced degree of education, most commonly at a post-secondary or university level, and who could attain a certain foreign language proficiency that enables them to apply it for their work purposes. As such, for Argentinian employees English language proficiency is part of their socio-educational background as well as their economic resources. For Argentinian learners, then, a language misuse in this area may potentially represent lost business opportunities. EFL-BP teachers designing pedagogic proposals involving impoliteness in such a context should address learners who consider themselves as acculturated individuals who handle a foreign language as part of their cultural and economic capitals.

- Argentinian participants identified their workplaces as a valid source for learning English as an informal, extended, and autonomous form. This is put in parallel with formal language learning, without diminishing its importance. The workplace informality of EFL learning is complementary of the formality of the language classroom. EFL-BP teachers may exploit the possibilities of both forms of instruction.

- Argentinian participants self-assessed their written skills higher than the language issues they report having. This may be part and indicative of their social roles claiming to be highly educated professionals, in which their language proficiency perceptions do not match their actual language performance. In their pedagogic designs involving impoliteness, EFL-BP teachers should be responsive of learners' own face claims and needs.

- Although they work in a multilingual environment, Argentinian participants identified cultural and pragmatic contents as their main language concern, including inadequacies or lack of language resources to satisfy phatic demand in their intercultural communication. EFL-BP teachers may approach teaching impoliteness as a way of enriching and stimulating learners' negotiation of interpersonal meanings with their colleagues and not just referring to fossilized language resources for the automatic processing of tasks. Teaching impoliteness is, in this sense, focusing on the management of a wider range of registers through written and oral forms.

- For Argentinian employees, email accomplishes regulatory and evaluative functions: it is the mean by which employees process work tasks and their professional performance. EFL-BP teachers may present pragmatic and discourse strategies to further improve such functions, such as opening and closing sequences, while referring to the possible social effects of negativity, uncooperativeness, conflict, and impoliteness in general if any of such functions are misused.

- Lacking cultural knowledge to handle different business levels and aligning to U.S. American cultural values are perceived as English language barriers for Argentinians. Teaching impoliteness in the EFL-BP classroom may

directly tackle these issues with a direct instruction of pragmatic and discursive language items referring to the avoidance and the overcoming of sociocultural pitfalls. To realize this, EFL-BP teachers may design pedagogic materials that expose learners to challenging situations, such as escalations, accountability reports, and explaining issues.

- Argentinian employees associate the notion impoliteness with the following features: *aggressiveness*, *imperativeness*, *inappropriateness*, *inconsiderateness*, *heedlessness*, *unfairness*, and *evasiveness*. Each characteristic is in itself a complex notion of its own and may very well be complementary of each other. The EFLBP should be aware at least of this array of features building up first-order representations of impoliteness, which may very well vary according to different discourse and practice communities within the same speech community.

- For Argentinian employees, impoliteness seems to be closer to higher degrees of perceived violence. The preferred set of semantic options is "careless / inconsiderate / disrespectful", but all the other options were syndicated as representing impoliteness as well. EFL-BP teachers should be aware of the ample array of understandings for impoliteness phenomena.

6   Argentinian evaluations of impoliteness

As a follow-up to the questionnaire, I administered the discourse completion test (DCT, see Appendix C) to the same participant responding to the questionnaire. This DCT was designed to elicit data for the following research question:

- How is impoliteness phenomena evaluated and represented at the workplace by Argentinian users and adult learners of EFL-BP when interacting by email with U.S American users of English as a first language?

I include in this section their evaluative responses.

6.1   Evaluation of Sequence 1: Today

It is worth reminding that this email sequence is between a U.S. project manager requesting an Argentinian manager to provide information about the undocumented processes and procedures created by a team of six members, all of them undergoing severance from the company. The U.S. American project manager is in charge of a project that aims at documenting in written all the know-how from an Argentinian team before they are finally laid off.

The questionnaire requested participants to provide their views on the contribution 2-TOD from Sequence 1: Today, with a similar context as the already described. Most participants (n=15) identified a negative attitude from the sender, while some of them (n=5) considered that the attitude was neutral (two participants preferred not to answer the question). Participants explained that the negative attitude is conveyed through the use of upper case and other marks or forms (hyphen, briefness), her lack of consideration for the time and efforts of the team, and her preference for certain members of the team. The responses focus on the use of the upper case as the feature most salient of the contribution, a usage that is clearly against a shared norm and practice, and deemed as aggressive, imperative, unprofessional, inappropriate, and even violent. There are other references, also, that refers to how the sender pushes the team to stress by setting a deadline on top of the business day without taking into consideration that there may be external factors affecting the team, making the communicative strategy selected inadequate. In addition, participants evaluated the sender as "ungrateful" and identify a bias favoring one member of the teams involved. I present my categorization of the responses received in the list below.

Aggressiveness, imperativeness, inappropriateness

- Upper case in the word TODAY only refers to the Argentinian team

- Seems to be a bit aggressive, in particular the use of upper case.

- The use of upper case, obviously!

- The email is aggressive because of its structure and the use of upper case.

- The use of upper case indicates an order.

- The use of upper case to stress the OK.

- The use of the hyphen and the upper case stresses the need of completing the task.

- The use of upper case is imperative.

- The way the email was written (particularly the use of upper case) has the tone of an ultimatum, is not professional, and is inappropriate.

- The form of communication is violent.

- Gets adversary.

Inconsiderateness

- Exposes the team to a lot of stress.

- Puts pressure on the team.

- Doesn't consider the time of the rest of the employees.

- Pushed to complete a task when the business day was well advanced.

- The email was sent almost by close of business.

- Doesn't consider the context of the situation.

- Didn't communicate openly and properly.

Heedlessness

- Didn't take into account the employee's needs.

- Doesn't consider the efforts of the team.

- Doesn't contribute to solve the situation.

- Should express gratitude for non-remunerated work hours.

- Is being ungrateful to the team.

Unfairness

- Does not include Tiffany, treating the local team differently.

- Does not demand more to Tiffany.
- The email should have been sent only to the main receiver and Ariel, not to all the teams; there's no need to put people on the spot.
- Copying the whole team is not necessary.

The responses received explaining the negative attitude perceived in 2-TOD adjust quite well to the features of impoliteness described in section §5. However, when participants are requested to identify the contribution according to the semantic sets (see Table 8), the option most favored is *adverse / unfavorable / negative* (n=10), which most clearly describe the antagonistic orientation of the sender. Far behind (n=5) is the set *hurtful / annoying / harassing* as the second most favored one.

Semantic Set	Count	Percentage
adverse / unfavorable / negative	10	45.45%
inappropriate / unsuitable / out of place	4	18.18%
careless / inconsiderate / disrespectful	3	13.64%
gross / ordinary / common	3	13.64%
hurtful / annoying / harassing	5	22.73%
offensive / provocative / insulting	1	4.55%
threatening / confrontational / intimidating	2	9.09%
violent / hostile / aggressive	4	18.18%
Other: It's a normal tone; inconsiderate, but not disrespectful; imperative	3	13.64%

Table 8. Notions of impoliteness from semantic sets for 2-TOD

Both sets describe the relation of the salient pragmalinguistic feature of the contribution (the use of the upper case) with the notion of impoliteness at stake, hedging the degree of *aggressiveness* to a minimum expression and thus preferring the feature of *inappropriateness* instead.

6.2   *Evaluation of Sequence 2: The Vacation Request*

Sequence 2: The Vacation Request presents a communicative situation in which the source of conflict rests on the apparent resistance of a U.S. American manager to

approve a request from an Argentinian analyst. The U.S. manager attempts at aligning the analyst to an appropriate communicative style within supposedly shared procedures. To do this, the emails from management are highly expressive, instantiating a reprimand with regulative purposes.

The scenario designed focuses on two contributions: 18-VAC and 19-VAC. For 18-VAC, most participants evaluated that the sender has a neutral attitude (n=9), followed by a negative (n=6), and a positive (n=4) one. For 19-VAC, most participants believed that the sender has a positive attitude (n=9), with equal opinions regarding negative (n=5) and neutral (n=5) attitudes. These responses display an orientation from neutral to negative for 18-VAC and from positive to negative or neutral for 19-VAC. Clearest of all is the more distributed responses regarding attitudes in this response-initiative pair. The reasons participants give for a negative attitude in 18-VAC included references to the time the sender took for a reply, the tone used, and the attempt of exerting control over a matter beyond the scope of the sender's responsibility[19]. Following the responses, I find that participants are evaluating the sender's negative attitude according to the *inappropriateness*, *inconsiderateness*, and *unfairness* of the contribution, as follows:

Inappropriateness
- Takes a lot of time to answer a mail of this nature.

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[19] Responses in Spanish: "[3] La gerenta sénior se tomó mucho tiempo en responder un mail de esta naturaleza. Cuando finalmente lo hizo, aprobó el pedido pero dejando ver su preocupación por demostrar su autoridad y desconociendo las regulaciones locales en relación con el período de descanso anual [9] La gerenta tiene una actitud negativa porque: - Demora dos semanas en responder un correo - La manera en que esta escrito el mensaje tiene una connotacion negativa. Si bien ella aprueba las vacaciones de Micaela tambien le expresa su descontento. [11] Como gerente debería presentar el feedback/devolución de una manera constructiva, recomendándole que y por qué es mejor que pida las vacaciones usando una pregunta. Y debería dar el ejemplo. [12] Porque asume que Micaela hizo algo mal cuando siguió todos los pasos requeridos. Además, es muy de mal gusto increpar a un empleado con sus vacaciones. [17] Porque confunde o da su propia interpretación a un simple mail. Salvo que haya algo más que aquí no se expresa. [20] El reclamo respecto de la forma de dar por sentado el tiempo de vacaciones es ilegítimo porque La Sra. Far supone que tiene el control sobre las vacaciones del empleado, cuando en realidad eso depende de la aprobación de RR.HH. y de los superiores directos de La Srta. Godoy."

- Delays two weeks in answering an email.

- Approves the request but wants to show her authority.

- Approves the request with discontent.

Inconsiderateness

- Assumes the employee is wrong.

- Is not constructive in providing feedback.

- Confuses or misinterprets the email.

- Conveys a negative connotation in the manner she writes the email.

- Ignores local regulations.

Unfairness

- Is of bad taste to objurgate employees because of their vacations.

- Supposes control over the employee's vacations.

The evaluations listed above are somewhat reflected with the semantic sets in Table 9, in which the most favored one is *threatening / confrontational / intimidating*, although still with relatively few selections (n=5). From this particular question, it is clear that, for Argentinian participants, 18-VAC relates to some other activity not quite falling within the scope of negativity, conflict, or impoliteness. Some participants (n=9) highlight the "institutional" and "serious" tone of 18-VAC, even the sender's heedlessness, but the contribution itself is not hostile, negative, or disrespectful (see footnote 20 below).

Semantic Set	Count	Percentage
adverse / unfavorable / negative	3	13.64%
inappropriate / unsuitable / out of place	2	9.09%
careless / inconsiderate / disrespectful	3	13.64%
gross / ordinary / common	0	0.00%
hurtful / annoying / harassing	1	4.55%
offensive / provocative / insulting	0	0.00%
threatening / confrontational / intimidating	5	22.73%
violent / hostile / aggressive	1	4.55%

Other[20]	9	40.91%

Table 9. Notions of impoliteness from semantic sets for 18-VAC

Interestingly, participants do not evaluate the sender of the response 19-VAC as having a negative attitude, but rather a positive one. Those few (n=5) who identified some degree of negativity in 19-VAC referred[21] to some annoyance reflected through the length of the contribution, the excuses, and the explanations provided, all of which attempt at evidencing the lack of interpersonal skills of the sender in 18-VAC. Similarly, very few participants (n=4) selected any of the semantic sets, but preferred the "Other" choice (n=12). Here, the brief responses refer to notions of "annoyance", "correctness", "institutional", "long", "reproachful", "appropriate", and "dangerous", as well as the "none of the above" comment[22].

6.3   *Implications*

The evaluation of scenarios provided an opportunity to contrast the results found in section §5, with the following basic implications:

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[20] Responses in Spanish: "[5]ES desfavorable pero Micaela lo podría haber pedido de manera más respetuosa y sin asunciones. De todos modos el resultado final se verá en el 1:1 [6] no, con ninguna. [7] Seria, institucional [8] ninguna [10] ninguna de las anteriores [13] La respuesta no me parece negativa. Si bien hay un desentendimiento en la forma en la que las vacaciones se asignan entre los diferentes países, no hay hostilidad en el mail de la gerenta. No hay mala intención en ninguna de las partes. En este caso, hay una falla de comunicacion entre el reporte local, la gerenta Cecil Far y Micaela respecto al periodo vacacional. Dado que todas partes trabajan juntas, las 3 deberian haber participado de la comunicacion vacacional desde el principio para evitar malos entendidos. [14] Desatento, aunque no irrespetuoso. [16] ninguno [22] No lo considero negativo."

[21] Responses in Spanish: "[3] La analista evidencia molestia con la respuesta de la gerenta en relación con su pedido de vacaciones. Asimismo, realiza una sugerencia que denota la falta de habilidad para el manejo del personal que tiene la gerenta sénior. [9] Creo que la gerenta tiene una actitud negativa porque: - Demora dos semanas en responder el email de Micaela - Si bien aprueba las vacaciones de Micaela deja en claro que no esta totalmente de acuerdo con la manera en que fueron informadas y con la cantidad de dias de vacaciones. [10] No me parece que tenga una actitud negativa. Simplemente es una diferencia cultural en cuanto a la forma en que espera el pedido sea realizado. [12] Muy largo... muchas excusas, esas cosas se aclaran por otros medios (por teléfono por ejemplo). La analista debe aprender cómo organizar sus mails para que no suenen igual de irrespetuosos que los de su jefa. [22] Estimo que su explicación puede afectar la relación con su jefa"

[22] Responses in Spanish: "[1] Molesto - [5] Es correcto el mail de la analista, yo le quitaría el enfoque tener razón vs no tenerla o ganar-perder.- [6] no, con ninguna - [7]institucional - [10] ninguna de las anteriores - [11] no - [12] Largo- [13] reprochante / defensivo en vez de conciliador - [14] Es positivo, invita a modificar conductas que bloquean procesos. - [15] acorde - [16] ninguno - [17] Peligroso".

- Open evaluations of impoliteness accommodate to the characteristics listed in section §5.4, particularly those referring to *inconsiderateness*, *heedlessness*, and *unfairness*. All of these are related to the professional roles assumed by Argentinian employees in relation to the efforts invested in achieving their work tasks.

- Closed evaluations preferred the *adverse / unfavourable / negative* semantic set, while also dismissing certain communicative activities as being unrelated to impoliteness.

- Normative breaches (use of capital letters of 2-TOD, chronemic delays in 19-VAC) are more easily evaluated as impoliteness. Use of linguistic and communicative cues are thus assessed against the norms and practices of the speech and discourse community under study.

- A notion of *expected impoliteness* is accepted as being part of certain situational roles. For example, in Sequence 1: Today it is expected from the U.S. American project manager to recap main topics, list next action steps, set deadlines with expected results, and maintain open the channel of communication. Also within her role is highlighting omissions, mistakes, and other risks challenging the project she is responsible for. Impoliteness may be produced when communicating these challenging issues. EFL-BP should consider type situational roles enacted by participants when determining the characteristics of impoliteness.

- Argentinian participants did not refer to any particular discursive feature related to impoliteness in the emails they evaluated. For example, in Sequence 1: Today the discursive patterned repetition of "something being omitted" is indicative of the U.S. American project manager's

activity of reporting the Argentinian manager's team to superiors for not providing the required information and, thus, putting the project at risk. This *off the record* blaming may be considered impoliteness from a discourse analysis perspective.[23]

7   U.S. American representations of impoliteness

To wrap-up this study, I present in this section the results from the semi-structured interviews to U.S. Americans. Interviews were conducted to elicit data for the following research question:

- What Argentinian evaluations and representations of impoliteness are confirmed by U.S. American employees have when communicating with Argentinian colleagues and employees?

As in section §5, I first outline interviewees' basic socio-demographic information, then I explore their representations of first-order impoliteness quoting directly from their responses, and then I stop at their evaluations of impoliteness when working with Argentinians.

7.1   *Interviewees*

All interviewees (n=10) are U.S. Americans living in Denver, Colorado (USA). Most of them acceded to be interviewed (n=8) after receiving their responses in written

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[23] In the sequence, the Argentinian manager was expected to "provide feedback", that is: acknowledge reception of Michelle's email, write an update on work in progress, or request a deadline extension, if necessary. Instead, 2-TOD substantiates that José has omitted doing any of this. Michelle's role in this case is still of a project manager, but one who makes people accountable for their actions, as well as one that warns about reporting such work performance to superiors. In the sequence, the project manager registers, puts on record, gets evidence that she is doing her job and those who are not. Michelle's narrative of her efforts is increasingly dramatic: "I know we reviewed it yesterday", "I conveyed this during the Analysis and On-Boarding Exercise" (1-TOD), "TODAY" (2-TOD), "I have pursued this route with…", "I can't provide the insight, I don't do the job", "I set up a meeting for this last Thursday. I asked multiple times: Do you have anything to add? No one said a word" (4-TOD). She even contradicts her interlocutor in 3-TOD by presenting him verified testimonies ("Andrea and Darío […] have reviewed the recorded sessions") and documented support ("Attachments: RE Reporting.msg"). Evidently, the audience of this sequence is broader: there are superiors auditing the work progress and Michelle is making sure her performance remains unquestioned.

and other (n=2) just responded by email. Participants are mainly females (n=8), with the age range of 26-35 strongly represented. Most of them (n=8) have at least secondary studies.

Interviewees are qualified employees at monolingual English office workplace, in interacting daily with Argentinian employees by phone, videoconference, or email. English is used as *lingua franca*. Interviewees have little or no knowledge of Spanish. All interviewees work for the same transnational company within the Customer Service industry, whose positions include managers, project managers, senior analysts, and analysts from the Human Capital department. They all have extensive knowledge on corporate training, designing instructional materials for various industry verticals.

7.2   *Notions of first-order impoliteness*

The first question of the interview aimed at eliciting an enumeration of the most common communicative activities that may be considered as impolite. The responses elicited refer to three notions of impoliteness: *interrupting*, *tardiness*, and *uncooperativeness*.

7.2.1   Interrupting

Interruption is a recurrent item brought up by different interviewees in different moments. NG states that someone who is impolite "interrupts a conversation during a meeting with questions or information which does not add value to the conversation", a view also shared by EG and MH. It is interesting to note that this notion of interruption is considered impolite if an interlocutor imposes without a clear communicate purpose or to claim egocentric needs ("talking just to talk or to see attention", "they [h]ave a feeling of self-importance", NG; "someone who is always thinking of what he or she is going to say next", AH). In addition, interruptive behavior encompasses a variety of

communicative activities, including *overlapping* ("Talking over others while they are talking", EG; "talking over other people on calls or in meetings", JF), *not listening* ("not actually listening to the person speaking", AH), and *disrupting* ("me to stop everything I am doing to assist them", NG; "...putting your phone on speaker phone disrupts the focus and concentration of others around you", AS; "disobey rules such as being quiet in a library", MH).

The emphasis on *interrupting* of the U.S. American interviewees refer to the normative force on the notion if impoliteness enacted by them. It does not really characterize the actual language functions of interruptions[24], but rather the potential interlocutive effects if the activity is a marked one, either because of its egocentric focus, recurrence, or particular situation ("to see[k] attention", NG; "always interrupting", EG; "in calls or in meetings", JF; "leaving a cell phone ringer on during the course of the day", AS). As such, the relation between (im)politeness and interrupting phenomena is not only mediated by the communicative genre or situation, but also by other variables that influence an interruption as being either cooperative and non-disruptive or competitive and disruptive (consult, for example, Cordisco, 2003; Da-Silva, 2008; Murata, 1994; Zhao & Gantz, 2003; D. H. Zimmerman & West, 1978). What is relevant for this study is the prominence given to the notion of interruption related to impoliteness for U.S. Americans, not once mentioned or referred to by Argentinians.

7.2.2   Tardiness

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[24] Following Bañón Hernández' (1997, p. 18) comprehensive study, interruption is a "semio-communicative process especially concerned with *disallowing talking* when you have the full right to do so and also with *disallowing saying* what you want to say". Interruption, as a pragmatic feature, can therefore be identified with a conscious conversational strategy that affects the structure of interactive communication. This strategy seeks to cause a change in the interlocutive roles of conversation: the hearer wants to become the speaker. This conversational disruption is not necessarily manifested through simultaneous speech. Thus, the main purpose of an interruption is depriving a speaker of its speech turn, despite the signs in conversation that the speaker wants to continue talking to emit a certain message.

The importance of time management is not only reflected in interruptions, but also on how late (and, in some cases, early) members of a team attend a meeting. There is an emphasis on this aspect showed only marginally by Argentinian participants. During the interviews, U.S. Americans strongly correlated impoliteness with unjustified and unexcused tardiness, particularly for work meetings. AH makes this point strongly "someone being impolite is always late to meetings when they aren't coming from another, or someone who just doesn't show to the meeting at all", and JF shares this view when associating impoliteness with the behavior of "being late for meetings or dropping early (without telling the person hosting the meeting ahead of time)".

Tardiness is an extralinguistic feature related to the chronemics of a social event (Poyatos, 2002). Particularly for overseas communication (over the phone or through a video-conference), chronemic inadequacies may not only affect the communicative situation, but the interlocutive process itself. AH illustrates this with a narration involving an experience with employees in India: "…they had a bad habit of showing all meetings at least 20 minutes late, and then expect us to recap the information given they missed during the meeting before moving forward. Or, they wouldn't show because they didn't want to, and then have the temerity to ask what they missed". From this illustration, two thoughts follow. First, for U.S. Americans tardiness is, as mentioned, a work transgression requiring repairing facework through mitigating devices (such as apologies, excuses, or explanations). The interlocutor failing to do so may be evaluated as impolite. Second, by-products of tardiness (such as increasing workload) constitute an *aggravated impoliteness* (Rudanko, 2006) that may cause work conflicts and escalations to management.

7.2.3   Uncooperativeness

Interrupting, particularly in the senses of *disrupting* and *not listening*, may be considered as part of a broader, work-related notion of uncooperativeness for the U.S. Americans interviewed. Uncooperativeness emerges when the expected collaborative nature for pursuing a common goal is perceived as not being adequate for a given situation, not being a *team player*, or not following rules. For instance, JJ highlights the importance of using an adequate tone to imply "a collaborative nature" in written communication that, in turn, "displays trust in others' abilities and contributions". AS refers to the norms that a group establishes for their practices, sustaining that "when someone operates outside of these team norms, it can be considered impolite". This is also shared by MH: someone is impolite "if [they] disobey rules".

Another expression of uncooperativeness is reflected at the level of not acknowledging other people's feelings. This is expressed as a form of *inconsideration* for the individual as when "[they] don't always stop to consider other people" (NG), "they have no regard for your feelings" or "they are hurtful/mean in their responses" (MH), and "doesn't take other people's feelings into consideration" (AH). In these cases, "they" stands for particularized members of a team within workplace interactions. It is interesting to notice that interviewees associate the notion of *inconsiderateness* to personal feelings and emotions put at play during work, while Argentinian participants associated it with their professional role and performance. For the U.S. Americans consulted, there seems to be an *emotional investment* with their work tasks and teams, and investment that goes beyond their expected professional roles to involve more personal ones. This idea seems to underlie CB's response when stating that their partners "are all professional and respectful. Not that we all don't sometimes have a bad day". Cooperativeness is thus assigned to a professional role at the workplace, the

expected communicative activity, while its opposite is assigned to infrequent events due to personal issues, moods, and attitudes.

7.3   Implications: Impoliteness when working with Argentinians

One salient feature brought up by different interviewees referred to the need of building a relationship with Argentinian teammates in order to establish *trust*. As reported, trusting is for Argentinians a form of social relation achieved in its practice, such as accomplishing mutual goals at work. Evaluations of communicative activities related to impoliteness stem from such practice of trust. NG refers to this in the following way: "I know when a relationship has been established with someone from Argentina, a trust is established, and it would be offensive or inappropriate to harm the relationship". AS supports this view mentioning as well the social habit of drinking green tea ("mate") as a community-builder: impoliteness is associated to "lack of relationship building" and "declining communal Mate". For AH, relationship building is associated to the alignment of communicative styles: "Sometimes it was difficult to communicate with Argentinean employees until I got to know them, and we understood each other's communication styles". Building trust is not an easy task, as AH expresses: "It seemed to take a lot of time before my team mates felt comfortable being more straightforward with their issues or if they had a problem with me and my communication".

Argentinians would consider as offensive, inappropriate, or impolite activities that put a *relation of trust* at stake. Such breaches may be realized "by avoiding them, leaving them out of a meeting or conversation that they have an interest in, or not acknowledging them as an individual" (NG), or when "their contributions [are questioned] in an impolite way, i.e. pointing out a problem or calling out fault in an unpolished way" (JJ), including "'calling someone out' for their errors or a mistake in a

team meeting" (AH). "Being evasive" or "putting on the spot" are *outgroupping* activities (consult O'Driscoll, 2001) that facilitate breaches of trust, configuring ideal contexts for the emergence of impoliteness. In addition, professional roles of Argentinians are particularly sensitive to performance-related evaluations. NG informs taking measures to "ensure that my colleagues in Argentina know their value and include them whenever possible", with a similar view from JJ: "our Argentinian teammates take a very strong pride in their work, and communication issues can arise when 'you're wrong' is implied in the communication".

U.S. American interviewees associate professional and personal roles of the Argentinians they work with. The responses given seem to suggest that those roles are not clearly differentiated, so a threat to the professional role may also entail one at a more personal level. The constant references to avoiding "hurting feelings" seem to indicate this. For instance, NG tries "to avoid hurt feelings or a loss of trust in our professional relationship", while JJ recalls that an "Argentinian individual was very hurt because teammates were bypassing her on decisions regarding a project that was hers. When teammates acted without her approval, her strong pride and ownership in her work resulted in hurt feelings and possibly even more negative consequences".

Interviewees reported limited language difficulties that may possibly lead to negativity, conflict, or impoliteness. The most common ones are vocabulary and pronunciation challenges, the latter more salient particularly during phone meetings or videoconferences. Closely related to this, some negative transfers from Spanish are reported, particularly the "strong accent" (JF, MH, CB). In addition, some references to specific uses of English are made, as illustrated by AH: "I did have some difficulties in understanding the use of the language – for example, I was often asked 'Do you have any doubts?' and I later understood that to mean 'Do you have any questions?'". These

difficulties are overcome by repetition or clarification requests. When referring to written skills for producing emails, in overall impression is quite a positive one. JJ illustrates a case where the length of the email is notorious for her, perhaps hinting the norm of writing short, to the point messages: "I can think of one Argentinian teammate who tends to overcommunicate. I think he spends a lot of time crafting the perfect email that "covers all the bases" and sometimes I worry about how he can possibly get all of his work done when accomplishing these types of emails".

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CONCLUSION

In this study, I set myself to contribute to the study of impoliteness within ILP and TEFL research by offering an exploratory and qualitative study on certain representations and evaluations of the phenomena made by Argentinian users and advanced learners of English as a foreign language for business purposes (EFL-BP). My focus was to study this as it emerges in communicative interactions via emails with U.S. American employees working in transnational companies with subsidiaries in Buenos Aires City. My goal of doing this was to present empirical implications for teaching impoliteness to Argentinian EFL-BP learners.

From a natural corpus of emails produced at a workplace in Buenos Aires City, I selected two sequences as representative of negativity, uncooperativeness, conflict, and impoliteness to design research instruments that would enable me to elicit data on how Argentinian participants represent and evaluate impoliteness. The research instruments enabled me to find indications that first-order notions of impoliteness for Argentinian participants pivoted in six recurrent features: *aggressiveness*, *imperativeness*, *inappropriateness*, *inconsiderateness*, *heedlessness*, *unfairness*, and *evasiveness*. To this, the U.S. American configuration of impoliteness should also be considered: *interrupting*, *tardiness*, and *uncooperativeness*. I made the proviso that these features should not be considered as mutually exclusive, exhaustive, or systematic categories, but rather the first step based on empirical results about first-order impoliteness phenomena for the sociocultural group under study. I also noted how the configurations

of *aggressiveness* and *inappropriateness* emerge from shared beliefs and ideologies diffused within the speech community Argentinian participants belong to.

The pedagogic implications suggested for teaching impoliteness to Argentinian adult learners of EFL-BP involve:

- Working with part of their cultural and economic capitals.

- Resorting to both formal and informal language instruction.

- Attending to needs and claims as *professionals*.

- Managing written and oral registers.

- Improving the regulatory and evaluative functions of emails.

- Reinforcing intercultural knowledge through challenging conflictive situations.

- Characterizing notions of impoliteness according to features encompassing *aggressiveness*, *imperativeness*, *inappropriateness*, *inconsiderateness*, *heedlessness*, *unfairness*, *evasiveness, interrupting*, *tardiness*, and *uncooperativeness*.

- Considering the type situational roles enacted by participants when determining the characteristics of impoliteness.

- Differentiating between impoliteness and other unrelated communicative activities (such as violence).

- Incorporating pragmatic and discursive elements that may help in improving the identification and management of impoliteness.

I have selected emails as the genre to focus my attention on impoliteness phenomena due to the intrinsic communicative asymmetry established by transnational companies when adopting one official language to conduct their business ventures with "efficiency" (Forey & Lockwood, 2007; Kellermann & Park, 2001). In the contexts

represented by my corpus, this asymmetry is most clearly reflected in oral communication between employees English as a first, second, and foreign language, particularly when subtractive policies on multilingualism (Annamalai, 2003, p. 114) are enforced. This type of asymmetric communication is part of the structural inequality expressed in more general terms by Phillipson (1992), when center-periphery distinctions are made and applied to specific contexts, such as "first or third world" or "major or minor language". In the case of my study, English competes and is dominant over Spanish, in terms of asserting and maintaining "the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (Phillipson, 1992, pp. 51).

Following the above, emails may stand as the arena where a certain "resistance" to linguistic and cultural dominance is responded to. Teaching impoliteness, its management for strategic purposes, is also part of that resistance.

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APPENDIX A

Exploration of Sequence 1: Today

1-TOD	Response	Initiation
	Michelle reminds José of assigned task.	Michelle requests José to complete the task.

Email
From: Powell, Michelle **Sent:** Friday, January 28, 2011 10:06 AM **To:** Hill, José; [6 other team members - Argentina] **Cc:** [2 Project Managers - USA]; Sirignano, Darío **Subject:** BBY:[Project]: Reporting Team, There seems to be a few things missing from this module. I know we reviewed it yesterday but in a conversation this AM, it appears that things were overlooked including Google Analytics, OneView, and SFTP. Please provide information on these items and anything else related to reporting. I would like to get this turned around today if possible, and if not, Monday latest. Please let me know if you have any questions. Just as a Reminder: I conveyed this during the Analysis and On-Boarding Exercise- Each module should be inclusive of ALL Tasks relating to a given content area. So for Example, the Reporting module should include all report related tasks whether Alex currently does them, Martin, German- doesn't matter.. **all** reporting functions should be represented. I think that there was some misunderstanding on this in the review yesterday. Thanks in Advance, Michelle

Acts	• Michelle observes missing information from a document which was overlooked in a previous work meeting. • Requests that information to be provided. • Sets a tight deadline. • Offers an open channel of communication for further clarification. • Reminds the team of a previously discussed item: • Stresses that all information should be disclosed, no matter who owns the process. • Clarifies the needs if any misunderstanding was made in a previous meeting.

2-TOD	Response	Initiation
	Michelle reminds José of assigned task.	Michelle sets a deadline for task

		completion.

Email		

From: Powell, Michelle
Sent: Monday, January 31, 2011 2:46 PM
To: Hill, José; [6 other team members - Argentina]
Cc: [2 Project Managers - USA]; Sirignano, Darío
Subject: REMINDER: [Project]: Reporting

Hi,

Please don't forget to provide your feedback on this- TODAY

Thanks,
Michelle

Acts	• Michelle sends a reminder for the set deadline.
	• Stresses the deadline.

3-TOD	**Response**	**Initiation**
	José expresses confusion over the task to be done.	José requests further clarification on the set task or required information.

Email		

From: Hill, José
Sent: lunes, enero 31, 2011 5:01 PM
To: Powell, Michelle; [6 other team members - Argentina]; Godoye, Andrea
Cc: [2 Project Managers - USA]; Sirignano, Darío
Subject: RE: REMINDER: [Project]: Reporting

Michelle, we are kind of confused with this. Google Analytics and Oneview is not even mentioned on this file, so I understand that this is what you need. However, I think this was entirely captured by Andrea when she jobshadowed the guys. Don´t we have a record of that? Martin is off today so if we have to do it from scratch I can have it for tomorrow.

Besides, let me tell you that there must have been a misunderstanding, as this file also does not contemplate German´s work (webpages). I assume that when this was revised, everybody thought this was not about reporting, so nobody raised a hand about this.

Please let me know your thoughts.

Thanks
José

Acts	• José expresses confusion over the task assigned.
	• Presumes having provided what was requested.
	• Declares that Andrea should have obtained the requested information.
	• Proposes new deadline ("if we have to do it from scratch")
	• Blames Andrea for not having done her job?
	• Explains why the team did not inform about possible issues.

4-TOD	**Response**	**Initiation**
	Michelle follows up her email 1-TOD by	Michelle insists on requesting José to

	requesting a response.	complete the task.

Email	

From: Powell, Michelle
Sent: lunes, enero 31, 2011 5:09:21 PM
To: Hill, José; [6 other team members - Argentina], Godoye, Andrea
Cc: [2 Project Managers - USA]; Sirignano, Darío
Subject: [Project]: Reporting
Attachments: RE Reporting.msg

Please see attached email chain. I have pursued this route with Andrea and Darío and they have reviewed the recorded sessions and this is not covered.

I am sorry you are not tracking José- I am not sure what you are confused about & I am not sure how I can say this differently:
ALL information related to reporting needs to be covered in this Facilitator Guide – whether you do it, Alex does it or German does it. If German's functions are reporting and something he does is not captured, it needs to be there.

In short, if it is not covered it needs to be there- I can't provide the insight, I don't do the job. I set up a meeting for this last Thursday. I asked multiple times: Do you have anything to add? No one said a word.

If you need me to set up a call to discuss I am happy to do so.

Thanks,
Michelle

Acts	• Michelle refers José to previous discussion in another email sequence (Reporting.msg). • Informs having consulted the topic with Andrea and Darío (Analyst and Senior Analyst). • Regrets that José is not following ("tracking") what is requested or needed for the project. • Copies verbatim previously written utterances. • Stresses having asked for information: puts José on the spot for being behind schedule or not having reported needs. • Puts José's team on the spot for not speaking up in the meetings. • Keeps communication channel opened.

Exploration of Sequence 2: The Vacation Request

16-VAC	**Response**	**Initiation**
	---	Andrea informs the dates for her vacations.

Email	

From: Godoye, Andrea
Sent: Tuesday, December 14, 2010 1:51 PM
To: Valsiner, Jenn
Subject: Vacations

Hi Jenn!
I'm sending you the dates of my vacaciones for the following summer (your winter ;))

From the 01/31/2011 to 02/20/2011.

Thanks and regards!

Andrea

Notes:	• Andrea informs the dates for her vacations. • >> "I'm sending you": Keeping her manager informed, no action needed.

17-VAC	**Response**	**Initiation**
	Jenn acknowledges email.	Jenn requests Andrea to consult with her project manager.
Email		

From: Valsiner, Jenn
Sent: Thursday, December 16, 2010 1:58 AM
To: Godoye, Andrea
Subject: RE: Vacations

Thanks Andrea. Will you please talk with Michelle about the impacts to her project and any potential assignments during this time?

18-VAC	**Response**	**Initiation**
	Jenn approves Andrea's vacations.	Jenn instructs Andrea how to request future time offs.
Email		

From: Valsiner, Jenn
Sent: Monday, January 03, 2011 3:30 PM
To: Godoye, Andrea
Cc: Valsiner, Jenn
Subject: RE: Vacations

Hi Andrea,

This time is approved with a caveat however. Going forward I would like to see these emails come in as a request for the time off rather than a statement. We can talk about this more in your next 1:1. Three weeks is a long time to be away especially when working on such a high priority project; time off requests should not be automatically assumed.

Please add this time off to the SP calendar.

Thanks,
Jenn

Notes:	• Jenn approves request conditionally. • Instructs Andrea on time-off requests. • Invites Andrea to talk about her request in a meeting. • Describes Andrea's vacations as a "long time". • Highlights that Andrea is working on high priority projects. • Informs Andrea not to automatically assume time offs.

19-VAC	Response	Initiation
	Andrea explains her vacations request.	Andrea suggests Jenn and Gustavo to discuss the time-off request process.

Email

From: Godoye, Andrea
Sent: Monday, January 03, 2011 3:54 PM
To: Valsiner, Jenn
Cc: Tosi, Gustavo; Ibarren, Luisa; Ibarren, Luisa (PM2)
Subject: RE: Vacations

Hi Jenn!
I think there is something not too clear regarding this process. Maybe you and Gustavo should discuss a clear policy about it for the whole team to avoid any further misunderstandings regarding this hoe to request the vacation period.

I have not automatically assumed this time off request, that is not an exceptional type of time off but the corresponding annual vacation period. I'm sorry you felt it was an assumption type of statement. Actually, I've proceeded the same way we always do, requesting the local permission (since vacation periods are determined by each country's labor law), and communicating this in proper time and manner to headquarters in US.
On the other hand, when I was told I would be assigned to a priority project over two month ago, it was never mentioned to me that that could be affecting or determining my vacation period.

I hope we can discuss this further on our next 1:1 or end of month review. I would not like us to have any misunderstanding on these type of items.

Thanks and regards!

Andrea

Notes:	• Andrea describes the time-off request process as not being clear.
	• Suggests that Jenn and Gustavo should meet to make clear policies.
	• >> Assigns responsibility to Jenn and Gustavo for derived misunderstandings.
	• Denies having automatically assumed time offs.
	• Affirms having followed procedures and obtain local approvals according to local labor laws.
	• Affirms not having being informed that a high-priority project would determine her vacations.
	• Wants to discuss this in a meeting as well to avoid misunderstandings.

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire

Lengua, interculturalidad y actitudes en contextos laborales

Gracias por acceder a realizar este cuestionario. Esta actividad se enmarca dentro de las actividades de investigación aprobadas por las autoridades del Máster en la Enseñanza del Inglés en Contextos Multilingües de la Universidad Jaume I (España), con el apoyo de la Universidad Nacional de Córdoba (Argentina) y el Programa EDICE (Suecia). Las preguntas que responderá a continuación permitirán recabar información sobre ciertas actitudes que potencialmente pueden realizarse a través del correo electrónico en contextos laborales bilingües entre empleados argentinos y estadounidenses. No hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas: simplemente responda según su experiencia personal y laboral. Los datos que se recaben aquí tienen un objetivo estrictamente académico. El investigador responsable de este proyecto garantiza preservar el anonimato y la confidencialidad de los datos. Ninguna información personal será compartida con terceros.

1. Género: ○ Femenino   ○ Masculino

2. Edad: _____

3. Educación máxima alcanzada

   ○ Secundario completo   ○ Secundario incompleto

   ○ Terciario completo   ○ Terciario incompleto

   ○ Universitario completo   ○ Universitario incompleto

4. ¿Dónde aprendió inglés? Por favor, marque todas las opciones que correspondan.

   ☐ En un instituto de lenguas ☐ En la escuela secundaria ☐ Con un profesor/a particular

   ☐ En el trabajo   ☐ Por mi cuenta, autodidacta   ☐ Otro: _____

5. ¿Aprobó alguno de estos exámenes internacionales? Por favor, marque todas las opciones que considere.

   ☐ Cambridge FCE / CAE / CPE ☐ TOEFL ☐ IELTS ☐ BEC ☐ TOEIC

6. Escriba en la tabla A-F si lo puede escribir en inglés.
   A. Sí, puedo hacer esto sin problemas.
   B. Puedo hacer esto la mayoría de las veces.
   C. Esto es algo difícil para mí, necesito algo de ayuda.
   D. Esto es muy difícil para mí, necesito mucha ayuda.
   E. No, no puedo hacer esto. Es demasiado difícil.

Escribir en inglés textos muy cortos y sencillos. Por ejemplo, un correo electrónico para felicitar a alguien o asignar una tarea. También puedo rellenar formularios o registros de progreso de un proyecto.	
Escribir en inglés textos breves y sencillos relativos a mis tareas laborales inmediatas.	

Por ejemplo, una nota sobre el status de un proyecto o las minutas de una reunión.
Escribir en inglés textos sencillos pero bien enlazados sobre temas conocidos o de interés personal. Por ejemplo, una entrada de blog que describa experiencias e impresiones personales para motivar al equipo.
Escribir en inglés textos claros y detallados sobre una amplia serie de temas relacionados con el trabajo. Por ejemplo, un informe sobre un proyecto. También puedo proponer soluciones para un problema o destacar determinados hechos y experiencias.
Escribir en inglés textos claros y bien estructurados exponiendo puntos de vista con cierta extensión. Puedo escribir sobre temas complejos en informes o propuestas, con énfasis en lo que considero que son aspectos importantes. Selecciono el estilo apropiado.
Escribir en inglés textos claros y fluidos con un estilo apropiado. Por ejemplo, correos electrónicos, informes, propuestas, evaluaciones, y otros textos complejos que presenten argumentos con una estructura lógica y eficaz para presentar ideas importantes. Puedo también escribir evaluaciones sobre el desempeño profesional de otras personas.

7. ¿A qué sector pertenece la empresa para la que trabaja? ○ Público ○ Privado

8. ¿Cómo se denomina su puesto laboral?

9. ¿Para qué departamento o equipo trabaja?

10. ¿Cuántos años lleva trabajando en la empresa?

11. ¿Dónde está su reporte o jefe directo? ○ Argentina ○ EE. UU. ○ Argentina y EE. UU.

12. ¿Qué lengua o lenguas utiliza para desarrollar diariamente las tareas profesionales en su lugar de trabajo? ○ Solamente español ○ Español e inglés ○ Solamente inglés

13. ¿Intercambia correos electrónicos con empleados de los EE. UU. para realizar su trabajo? ○ Sí ○ No

14. En general, ¿cuán frecuentemente utiliza inglés en su lugar de trabajo?
      ○ Raramente, menos del 10% de mi tiempo.
      ○ Ocasionalmente, alrededor del 30% de mi tiempo.
      ○ A veces, alrededor del 50% de mi tiempo.
      ○ Frecuentemente, alrededor del 70% de mi tiempo.
      ○ Casi siempre, alrededor del 90% de mi tiempo.

15. ¿Encontró o encuentra dificultades cuando se comunica con empleados de los EE. UU.?
    ↓   ○ Sí   ○ No

    16. ¿Por ejemplo?

17. ¿Cree que usted perdió oportunidades laborales o baja de desempeño debido a dificultades de comunicación?
    ↓   ○ Sí   ○ No

    18. ¿Por ejemplo?

19. ¿Para qué utiliza el correo electrónico en inglés en su lugar de trabajo?

20. ¿Recuerda especialmente un mal empleo del correo electrónico en inglés cometido por usted u otra persona?
    ↓   ○ Sí   ○ No

    21. ¿Cuál fue tal error?

22. ¿Comunica por correo electrónico en inglés situaciones potencialmente negativas o conflictivas?
    ↓   ○ Sí   ○ No

    23. ¿Por ejemplo?

24. ¿Cuán frecuentemente escribe correos electrónicos en inglés para expresar lo siguiente? Escriba A-F para cada fila de la tabla.

A. Siempre   B. Frecuentemente   C. A veces   D. No muy frecuentemente
E. Muy pocas veces   F. Nunca

Reprochar		Ordenar	
Quejarme		Criticar	
Rehusarme		Expresar desacuerdo	
Culpar			

25. En su trabajo, ¿cuán frecuentemente encuentra actitudes negativas por medio del correo electrónico de empleados estadounidenses?
- ○ Casi nunca
- ○ Raramente
- ○ Ocasionalmente
- ○ A veces
- ○ Frecuentemente
- ○ Casi siempre

↓

  26. ¿Qué actitudes negativas encuentra, por ejemplo?

27. ¿Sabe lo que es "inapropiado", "descortés" u "ofensivo" para los empleados estadounidenses con los que trabaja?

↓   ○ Sí   ○ No

  28. ¿Por ejemplo?

29. ¿Qué haría si encontrara actitudes negativas por medio del correo electrónico de empleados estadounidenses? Por favor, marque todas las opciones que considere.
- ☐ Respondería el correo, pero ignoraría la actitud negativa.
- ☐ No respondería el correo. ☐ Respondería el correo y señalaría la actitud negativa para llegar a una solución conjunta. ☐ Respondería el correo y señalaría la actitud negativa para que la persona cambie su actitud. ☐ Reenviaría el correo a mi superior, escalando el tema. ☐ Otro: _____

30. Usted, ¿qué actitudes negativas comunicaría por correo electrónico a empleados estadounidenses? Por favor, marque todas las opciones que considere.
- ☐ Insultar ☐ Ironizar ☐ Hacer callar ☐ Recriminar ☐ Criticar ☐ Otro: _____
- ☐ Señalar "defectos" culturales ☐ No comunicaría ninguna actitud negativa.

31. Para usted, ¿cómo es o sería algo o alguien "descortés" en el trabajo?

32. En su trabajo, ¿asocia algo o alguien "descortés" con alguna de las siguientes nociones? Por favor, marque todas las opciones que considere.
- ☐ adverso / desfavorable / negativo ☐ inapropiado / impropio / fuera de lugar
- ☐ desatento / desconsiderado / irrespetuoso ☐ grosero / ordinario / vulgar
- ☐ hiriente / molesto / hostigador ☐ ofensivo / provocativo / insultante
- ☐ amenazante / conflictivo / intimidante ☐ violento / hostil / agresivo
- ☐ Otro: _____

33. ¿Le parece que necesita mejorar su nivel de inglés para comunicar de forma más efectiva actitudes negativas en correos electrónicos con empleados estadounidenses?

↓   ○ Sí   ○ No

  34. ¿Qué le haría falta mejorar?

FIN DEL CUESTIONARIO
Gracias por participar en esta investigación. Sus respuestas son muy valoradas.

APPENDIX C

Discourse completion test

Lengua, interculturalidad y actitudes en contextos laborales

Gracias por acceder a realizar este cuestionario. Esta actividad se enmarca dentro de las actividades de investigación aprobadas por las autoridades del Máster en la Enseñanza del Inglés en Contextos Multilingües de la Universidad Jaume I (España), con el apoyo de la Universidad Nacional de Córdoba (Argentina) y el Programa EDICE (Suecia). Las preguntas que responderá a continuación permitirán recabar información sobre ciertas actitudes que potencialmente pueden realizarse a través del correo electrónico en contextos laborales bilingües entre empleados argentinos y estadounidenses. No hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas: simplemente responda según su experiencia personal y laboral. Los datos que se recaben aquí tienen un objetivo estrictamente académico. El investigador responsable de este proyecto garantiza preservar el anonimato y la confidencialidad de los datos. Ninguna información personal será compartida con terceros.

Escenario 1 - Christina Coble y usted
Por favor, lea el siguiente escenario hipotético.

Imagine que usted trabaja como jefe o jefa de un equipo local (en su ciudad), con seis personas a su cargo. Su reporte directo es Christina Coble, una gerenta americana con sede en Denver (EE. UU.). En las últimas cinco semanas, Christina le ha asignado múltiples tareas a su equipo, a pesar de sus reiterados avisos sobre el exceso de volumen de asignaciones que está recibiendo. Todo el equipo, inclusive usted, se ha quedado horas laborales extras durante las dos últimas semanas para cumplir con todas las tareas asignadas. Además, debe procesar constantes correcciones hechas por el Departamento de Calidad. Todos sus empleados han accedido a extender el horario laboral, aún sabiendo que la política de la empresa es no pagar horas extras.

Uno de sus empleados locales, Ariel Sirignano, se ha quejado ya de tal situación, que considera como "injusta". Otra empleada americana en el equipo, Tiffany Kavanaugh, que trabaja de forma remota desde Washington (EE. UU), ha entregado documentos muy por debajo de los estándares requeridos. Ambos tienen igual antigüedad, conocimientos y habilidades que el resto del equipo.

En lo personal, ayer usted solicitó a Recursos Humanos extender por dos horas su horario de almuerzo para realizar un trámite bancario, solicitud que fue rechazada inmediatamente por su gerenta Christina Coble.

Antes de terminar la jornada laboral, recibe el siguiente correo electrónico de Christina Coble, con copia a todos los miembros de su equipo excepto a Tiffany Kavanaugh:

```
From: Christina Coble
Sent: Monday, January 31, 2011 2:46 PM
To:  You
Cc:  Sirignano, Ariel; Team A; Team B
Subject: REMINDER: ExB: BO: Reporting

Hi,

Please don't forget to provide your work on this- TODAY

Thanks,
Christina
```

35. ¿Cómo evalúa usted la actitud de la gerenta Christina Coble en su correo electrónico?

- ○ La gerenta tiene una actitud positiva.
- ○ La gerenta tiene una actitud neutral.
- ○ La gerenta tiene una actitud negativa.

36. ¿Por qué?

37. ¿Asocia usted el correo electrónico de la gerenta con alguna de las siguientes nociones?

- ☐ adverso / desfavorable / negativo
- ☐ inapropiado / impropio / fuera de lugar
- ☐ desatento / desconsiderado / irrespetuoso
- ☐ grosero / ordinario / vulgar
- ☐ hiriente / molesto / hostigador
- ☐ ofensivo / provocativo / insultante
- ☐ amenazante / conflictivo / intimidante
- ☐ violento / hostil / agresivo
- ☐ Otro: _____

38. ¿Qué le respondería a la gerenta? Escriba su respuesta en inglés. Utilice otra hoja si necesita más espacio. Si es necesario, indique si envía el correo electrónico solamente a la gerenta Christina Coble o con copia a todos los miembros del equipo.

Escenario 2 - Micaela Godoy y Cecil Far
Por favor, lea siguiente escenario hipotético.

Micaela Godoy es una analista argentina con ocho años de antigüedad en la empresa TeleNow y cuatro años en el equipo de Innovación y Desarrollo. Su reporte laboral directo es Cecil Far, una gerenta sénior con sede en Englewood, EEUU. Además, Micaela reporta administrativamente en Argentina a Miguel Arduino, un gerente sénior, y a Silvia Pascual y Noelia Soler, ambas directoras de proyectos.

Como en febrero del año próximo Micaela desea tomarse sus vacaciones, envía un correo electrónico con un mes y medio de anticipación a la gerenta sénior Cecil Far para comunicarle las fechas precisas de sus vacaciones. Ya que tales fechas no afectaban el desarrollo de los proyectos en marcha, el periodo de vacaciones propuesto por Micaela fue aprobada por la cadena de reporte local Silvia Pascual, Noelia Soler y Miguel Arduino en correos electrónicos internos en español, según el proceso de la empresa y la ley laboral argentina.

Este es el correo electrónico enviado por la analista **Micaela Godoy** a Cecil Far:

From: Godoy, Micaela
Sent: Tuesday, December 14, 2010 1:51 PM
To: Far, Cecil
Subject: Vacations

Hi Cecil!
I'm sending you the dates of my vacaciones for the following summer (your winter
;).)
From the 01/31/2011 to 02/20/2011.

Thanks and regards!

Micaela

Dos semanas después, la gerenta **Cecil Far** envía una respuesta. Este es su correo electrónico:

From: Far, Cecil
Sent: Monday, January 03, 2011 3:30 PM
To: Godoy, Micaela
Subject: RE: Vacations

Hi Micaela,

This time is approved with a caveat however. Going forward I would like to see these emails come in as a request for the time off rather than a statement. We can talk about this more in your next 1:1. Three weeks is a long time to be away especially when working on such a high priority project; time off requests should not be automatically assumed.

Please add this time off to the production calendar.

Thanks,
Cecil

39. ¿Cómo evalúa usted la actitud de la gerenta Cecil Far en su correo electrónico?
- ○ La gerenta tiene una actitud positiva.
- ○ La gerenta tiene una actitud neutral.
- ○ La gerenta tiene una actitud negativa.

40. ¿Por qué?

41. ¿Asocia usted el correo electrónico de la gerenta con alguna de las siguientes nociones?
- ☐ adverso / desfavorable / negativo
- ☐ inapropiado / impropio / fuera de lugar
- ☐ desatento / desconsiderado / irrespetuoso
- ☐ grosero / ordinario / vulgar
- ☐ hiriente / molesto / hostigador
- ☐ ofensivo / provocativo / insultante
- ☐ amenazante / conflictivo / intimidante
- ☐ violento / hostil / agresivo
- ☐ Otro: _____

42. Imagine que usted es Micaela Godoy. ¿Qué le respondería a la gerenta? Escriba su respuesta en inglés. Utilice otra hoja si necesita más espacio. Si es necesario, indique si envía el correo electrónico con copia a Silvia Pascual, Noelia Soler y Miguel Arduino.

43. ¿Cómo evalúa usted la actitud de la analista Micaela Godoy en el siguiente correo electrónico enviado como respuesta?

○ La analista tiene una actitud positiva.
○ La analista tiene una actitud neutral.
○ La analista tiene una actitud negativa.

44. ¿Por qué?

45. ¿Asocia usted el correo electrónico de la analista con alguna de las siguientes nociones?
☐ adverso / desfavorable / negativo
☐ inapropiado / impropio / fuera de lugar
☐ desatento / desconsiderado / irrespetuoso
☐ grosero / ordinario / vulgar
☐ hiriente / molesto / hostigador
☐ ofensivo / provocativo / insultante
☐ amenazante / conflictivo / intimidante
☐ violento / hostil / agresivo
☐ Otro: _____

FIN DEL CUESTIONARIO
Gracias por participar en esta investigación. Sus respuestas son muy valoradas.

APPENDIX D

Semi-structured interviews

1. At work, do you relate someone "impolite" with any of the following notions? Write a cross next to each item or leave it blank.
   - rude
   - adverse / unfavorable / negative
   - inappropriate / unsuitable / out of place
   - careless / inconsiderate / disrespectful
   - gross / ordinary / common
   - hurtful / annoying / harassing
   - offensive / provocative / insulting
   - threatening / confrontational / intimidating
   - violent / hostile / aggressive
   - Other: _____

2. At work, how is someone considered "impolite"?
3. Do you have any idea or knowledge of what is "inappropriate", "impolite", "rude", or "offensive" for Argentinean employees? If yes, can you provide examples?
4. Do you or did you find difficulties when communicating with Argentinean employees? If yes, can you provide examples?
5. Do you or did you think that work/business opportunities were lost or low work performances were caused by communication difficulties with Argentinean employees?
6. Do you recall in particular any erroneous use of emails from Argentinean employees? Can you comment on such error(s)?
7. Do you or did you find negative attitudes by email from Argentinean employees? If yes, which negative attitudes?
8. If you find negative attitudes, what do you do with them?