Resisting second-language politeness in the foreign language classroom

Resistir la cortesía de un segundo idioma en el aula de lengua extranjera

Gerrard Edwin Mugdord

Gerrard Edwin Mugdord

gerrard.mugford@academicos.udg.mx

Universidad de Guadalajara

ORCID: 9781032620305

ABSTRACT: Whilst being given more and more prominence in the foreign language classroom, pragmatics is often reduced to teaching and practising pre-established patterns and structures such as those found in speech acts, communicative functions, and politeness formulae. However, an important pedagogical factor is often missing from an examination of pragmatics teaching since teachers have their own experiences and ways of interacting. These may have emerged from their first language or have developed and evolved along with their knowledge and experience of the target language. Therefore, there is always an element of choice in second-language pragmatics. The following questions may arise: Should speakers only adhere to target language norms? Can speakers transfer first-language pragmatic practices to the target language? In other words, to what extent is there a degree of individuality and choice in language use that incorporates individual traits, beliefs, and attitudes? Furthermore, contextual issues need to be taken into consideration when engaging in second-language pragmatics. This paper takes one aspect of pragmatics, linguistic politeness, and examines how it is taught in the language classroom. Specifically, it examines how teachers of English as a foreign language in Guadalajara, Mexico, approach linguistic politeness and how they position themselves with respect to teaching target-language norms, and whether they allow students to engage in the pragmatic transfer of politeness practices from their first language to the target language.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Pragmatics; linguistic politeness, second-language learning; pragmatic transfer

RESUMEN: Aunque se le da más y más importancia en el aula de lenguas extranjeras, la pragmática a menudo se reduce a enseñar y practicar patrones y estructuras preestablecidos, como los que se encuentran en los actos del habla, las funciones comunicativas y las fórmulas de cortesía. Sin embargo, frecuentemente falta un factor pedagógico importante en la investigación sobre la enseñanza de pragmática,

ya que los profesores tienen sus propias experiencias y formas de interactuar. Estos pueden haber surgido de su lengua materna o haberse desarrollado y evolucionado junto con sus conocimientos y experiencias de la lengua meta. Por lo tanto, siempre hay un elemento de elección en la pragmática de una segunda lengua. Pueden surgir las siguientes preguntas: ¿Deben los hablantes únicamente adherirse a las normas de la lengua meta? ¿Pueden los hablantes transferir prácticas pragmáticas de su primera lengua a la lengua meta? En otras palabras, ¿hasta qué punto existe un grado de individualidad y elección en el uso del lenguaje que incorpora rasgos, creencias y actitudes individuales? Además, es necesario tener en cuenta las cuestiones contextuales al participar en la pragmática de una segunda lengua. Este artículo aborda un aspecto de la pragmática, la cortesía lingüística, y examina cómo se enseña en el aula de idiomas. Específicamente, examina cómo los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera en Guadalajara, México, abordan la cortesía lingüística y cómo se posicionan con respecto a la enseñanza de las normas de la lengua meta y si permiten a los estudiantes participar en la transferencia pragmática de prácticas de cortesía desde su primera infancia. idioma al idioma de destino.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Pragmática; cortesía lingüística, aprendizaje de una segunda lengua; transferencia pragmática

1. Introduction

Teaching pragmatic knowledge and ability is being given increased prominence in the foreign language (FL) classroom (e.g., Grundtvig, 2021; Roever, 2022). However, pragmatics is more often than not presented, reproduced, and practised in terms of communicative functions (speech acts) and appropriate speaker/listener behaviour rather than in terms of interactants' choice and empowerment, as argued by Murray:

> For all intents and purposes, the teaching of pragmatics has amounted to little more than presenting students with 'lists of useful expressions' (Crandall and Basturkmen 2004) and conversations and dialogues offering pragmatically inaccurate models (see Bardovi-Harlig 1996: 23–6), which they then memorize and drill, be it in authentic contexts of use.
>
> (2012, p. 320)

Teaching FL pragmatics is demanding enough when dealing with cross-cultural contrasts and comparisons. Examining interpersonal aspects such as linguistic politeness can represent an especially difficult pedagogical challenge as learners are often more than aware of sociocultural and linguistic differences between first language (L1) and target language (TL) norms and behavioural patterns. Consequently, learners may identify with TL conventions and norms or they may question and resist unfamiliar and seemingly outlandish practices (e.g., Ishihara, 2019; Taguchi, 2023). At the same time, it is important to take into consideration the teachers' own personal and professional experience and knowledge of TL practices along with "structural realities of social, historical, and cultural contexts" (Rogers and Wetzel, 2013, p. 63). To circumvent potential problems, teachers may simply avoid dealing directly with TL concepts of linguistic politeness altogether or downplay its use and importance. In doing so, L1 and TL experiences and behavioural patterns are plainly ignored, and teachers adhere to 'textbook' politeness structures and dictates.

To understand the challenges, difficulties, and obstacles involved in teaching and learning TL politeness practices and patterns, this article examines how Mexican teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) approach 'expected' TL politeness conduct, i.e., politic (Watts, 2003) and position themselves with respect to pragmatic transfer of learners' L1 resources to the TL. The politic dimension highlights TL conventions and the degree to which the learners' L1 norms are transferred to the TL. Pragmatic transfer examines how FL interlocutors build on existing communicative assets and resources. I examine the possible uses of L1 politic practices in TL instruction – a position that often clashes with conventional FL teaching.

2. Literature Review

In the literature review section, I first examine how teachers approach politeness in terms of 'politic' conduct (Watts, 2003) and the teachers' source of TL knowledge. I then relate politeness to the Mexican context with the aim of highlighting any dissimilar practices since this may be extremely relevant in the Mexican EFL context. Subsequently, I examine learners' attitudes towards TL politic behaviour and the possible transfer of first-language resources.

2.1 Teachers and politic conduct

Probably the most straightforward and easily-mapped out approach to teaching politeness is to present and practise prescriptive behaviour that is mirrored in EFL textbooks. This reflects what Watts terms politic politeness, i.e., "linguistic behaviour which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the ongoing interaction" (2003, p. 19). On one level, this can be seen in the use of *please* and *thank you* along with indirect language structures. On another level, it reflects expected polite behaviour, e.g., punctuality or respecting another's personal space. The source of textbook politeness may come from a variety of sources, including the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR) (2001). In the section on sociolinguistic competence, the CEFR identifies politeness conventions which are classified into 'positive' politeness (e.g., showing interest, sharing experiences, expressing affection, etc.), 'negative' politeness (e.g., "avoiding face threatening behaviour (dogmatism, direct orders, etc.)") and the "appropriate use of 'please', 'thank you', etc." (2001, p. 119). These guidelines may be acted out in the classroom through greetings routines and showing sociability, promoting indirect language over and above direct language, and stressing the importance of saying *please* and *thank you*. By discussing politeness in terms of conventions, the CEFR advocates politeness as established and predictable and downplays emerging and co-constructive dimensions. These may, however, clash with both teachers' and learners' concepts and experiences of politeness in their first language. Furthermore, the CEFR framework potentially ignores emerging conflictive sociocultural aspects as FL users face unfamiliar and unexpected practices. However, teachers may welcome a politic approach as it provides a safe and well-trodden communicative path since it purports to reflect firmly established societal norms. However,

in contrast, FL users may oppose and resist convention and tradition and seek out their own ways of conveying politic conduct in the TL. Therefore, teachers

> need to examine pragmatic competence based on how L2 learners can navigate communicative demands by using communication strategies skillfully while negotiating their identities. At the same time, it is tenable for teachers to move away from the sole dependence on idealized native-speaker models of appropriateness, politeness, and formality in their pedagogical practice and instead incorporate a nonessentialist viewpoint into formal instruction.
>
> (Taguchi and Ishihara, 2018, p.80)

Therefore, teachers need to position teaching conventionalised politeness behaviour against learners' communicative abilities, possible tensions with TL practices, and the likely desire for students to maintain aspects of their L1 identity. With this in mind, I examine Mexican politic practices and then examine any possible resistance or opposition to adopting TL patterns of behaviour which teachers may accept from their students.

2.2 Mexican politic practices

Teachers have to take into consideration students' own L1 politic behaviour i.e. the behavioural norms that come from their first language and culture. Considerable research has been carried out into Mexican politic conduct (e.g. Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; Mugford, 2014, 2020, 2023). Mexican relational behaviours can be divided into politic and super-politic practices (Mugford, 2023). Politic reflects expected everyday behaviour which characterises the hallmarks of 'polite' society whilst super-politic conduct goes beyond anticipated behaviour and shows that extra effort and consideration has been invested when interacting with others.

Investment becomes an important concept in FL interaction as politic practices can be separated into the following categories:

1. Mexican politic practices:

- *Educado* (courteous and well-mannered)
- *Dar una buena imagen* (give a good personal impression of oneself)
- *Detallista* (thoughtful over small details and considerate of other's needs by giving them, for instance, small gifts)
- *Atento* (attentive and observant of other's needs)
- *Considerado* (considerate and caring)
- *Complaciente* (accommodating and compliant)
- *Galante* and *caballeroso* (gentlemanly behaviour)

2. Mexican super-politic practices:

- *Dar su lugar* (recognising social worth of others)
- *Mostrar respeto* (showing respect)
- *Hacer el bien* (doing good to others)
- *Acomedirse (*being immediately responsive to the needs of others, without being asked)
- *Ser servicial* (being helpful and attentive and doing it gracefully).

Whilst recognisable in other languages, these behavioural practices are especially important in Mexican politic conduct because they reflect how one should actually behave in society and, just as importantly, be seen to behave. Mexican politic practices characterise one's upbringing and reflect on oneself and one's family. Mexican super-politic practices demonstrate the extent to which interactants are willing to go to make others feel socially and interpersonally at ease. It is important to recognise that Mexican politic behaviour does not solely represent conventional and formulaic behaviour since there is a strong personal and interpersonal element depending on one's relationship with, and attitude towards, other interlocutors, e.g., social distance/closeness, involvement/disinterest and likeability/undesirability. Given the strong personal and interpersonal element to Mexican politic conduct, I now examine possible instances of resistance and opposition to expected TL behaviour.

2.3 Resistance and opposition

Important as it is to follow TL convention and accepted practices, politic behaviour potentially places FL users in a compliant and acquiescent position where they have to follow the rules and regulations with little room for expressing their own voice and assuming a degree of ownership over politeness practices. It reinforces the idea that FL users have a reduced personality, as noted by Harder since

> [a]foreigner is not permitted to go beyond a certain limited repertoire; if he starts swearing fluently, for instance, he

is unlikely to achieve the conventional communicative effect, i.e., underlining the serious objections he has against the situation in question.

> (1980, p. 268)

However, FL interactants often resist being restricted to merely reciting and regurgitating standard language structures and patterns. As argued by Taguchi, "we need to understand that learners are active agents who make their own linguistic choices" (2023, p. 501). A level of defiance has emerged from FL interactants who do not want to blindly adhere to TL interactional practices as argued by Kecskes:

> Several researchers have noted that nonnative speakers make deliberate, conscious choices about pragmatic strategies and/or features of the target language.… Research has indicated that not all language learners wish to behave pragmatically just like native speakers of the target language.
>
> (2014, p. 68)

FL learner resistance has been identified in a range of strategies, including the use of silence (Kidd, 2016), rejection of TL norms and practices (Kinginger and Ferrell, 2004), negation of TL values (Ishihara and Tarone, 2009; Iwasaki, 2010) and rejection of stylistic variation (van Compernolle and Williams, 2012). Indeed, when it comes to non-native speakers interacting between themselves, "ELF [English as a lingua franca] has taken on a life of its own, in principle independent to a considerable degree of the norms established by its na-

tive speakers, and that is what needs to be recognized" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 8). FL interactants may approach politic behaviour with their own variety of the TL. They may feel uncomfortable with TL practices (Iwasaki, 2011), and furthermore, "[w]hen the norms contradict their desired social identity, learners may decide not to conform to the norms, and instead create their own social positions in relation to others" (Taguchi, 2023, p. 505). Consequently, they may reject English-language varieties from the United States and the United Kingdom, which comprise the so-called 'norm-providing' Inner Circle countries (and also includes Australia, Canada, Ireland, and New Zealand) (Kachru, 1982, 1985). More prominence has now been given to varieties from outer-circle countries (e.g., India, Nigeria, and Pakistan) and expanding-circle countries (e.g., China, Denmark, and Mexico). This tendency can be seen across a wide spectrum of FL users, as argued by Ishihara, who contends that EFL speakers

> make deliberate language choices that do not necessarily align with those of native speakers of English in inner-circle countries for the purpose of identity assertion and group solidarity (Berns 2015). Nativized language varieties are often marginalized as substandard, erroneous, or failed (Seidlhofer, 2011) due to the asymmetrical power structure embedded in the sociopolitical structure. While L1 speakers' divergence from normative language is often accepted positively as a manifestation of unique creativity, L2 users are not given the same legitimacy and may feel deprived of their agency to exercise creativity in expressing identities (Kasanga 2006).
>
> (2019, p. 161)

On the other hand, whilst not rejecting outright Inner Circle politic norms, FL users may seek a 'third way' or 'third space' (Cohen, 2018; Kramsch, 1993), which entails intermixing and amalgamating L1 and L2 resources and producing new and novel politic patterns which can especially be witnessed in the interactions among speakers of ELF (see, for instance, Batziakas, 2016; Ferenčík, 2014; Lindqvist, 2022). Indeed, FL users may adhere to a non-recognised, non-standard variety of English such as Singlish (Singaporean English), Kongish (Hong Kong English), or Mexican English. FL speakers may shun conventionality and acceptability when adopting nonstandard politeness norms. Furthermore, "[u]nlike learners who are resident in an Inner Circle context, most learners elsewhere get input from local sources whether it be from the linguistic environment outside of class or from the local teachers in the classroom" (Berns, 2015, p. 28).

Given their own experience as FL learners, teachers may align themselves with learners' expressions of opposition and resistance (Canagarajah, 1999; Giroux, 1983). Opposition and resistance reflect two ways of challenging social and interactional norms. This difference has been underscored by Canagarajah:

> Giroux distinguishes between *resistance* – which he sees as displaying ideological clarity and commitment to collec-

tive action for social transformation –
from mere *opposition*, which is unclear,
ambivalent, and largely passive.

(1999, p. 98, author's italics)

Implementing TL politic behaviour can
also be seen as imposing Inner Circle
norms on FL speakers. Ishihara suggests
teachers exercise caution when asking inte-
ractants to adhere to TL norms since

> it could be considered a form of lin-
> guistic imperialism if native-speaker
> norms were imposed upon learners
> with conformity expected. Teachers
> should be advised to exercise sensitivi-
> ty in accepting and assessing learners'
> unique negotiation of identity, which
> may diverge from native-speakers'
> norms. In doing so, teachers may wish
> to first explore learner goals and the
> status of their pragmatic knowledge.

(2019, p. 170)

Teachers, therefore, may aim to achieve
intelligibility in politic behaviour rather
than enforcing TL understandings of cor-
rectness. Intelligibility "may be broadly
defined as the extent to which a speaker's
message is actually understood by a lis-
tener" (Munro and Derwing, 1999: 289).
In this way, FL interlocutors can be seen
to accomplish politic conduct rather than
merely reproducing it as dictated by Inner
Circle countries' norms. Given possible in-
stances of resistance and opposition, it is
important to understand the influence of
the first language on the target language.
This can be understood through the con-
cept of pragmatic transfer.

2.4 Pragmatic transfer

Pragmatic transfer is a key consideration in
assessing and understanding TL politeness
behaviour. Whilst pragmatic transfer is all
too often examined in terms of L1 interfer-
ence in the TL, it is important for teachers
to recognise that students often see their
mother tongue as an important resource
for determining how to establish, develop
and maintain TL relationships. This study
considers the extent to which L1 pragmatic
resources and assets are transferred to the
TL by Mexican EFL learners, especial-
ly in terms of encyclopaedic knowledge,
schemata, frames, and scripts. As a readi-
ly available asset, the L1 offers tried-and-
tested language practices and patterns and
a wealth of interactional experiences and
personal histories that reflect personal, in-
terpersonal, and societal attitudes, beliefs,
and values. Students will often want to ex-
press these in the TL. Therefore, it is coun-
terintuitive to ask learners to leave their
L1 experiences and knowledge outside the
classroom when they can provide a basis
and framework for determining relational
conventions, norms, and patterns. Fur-
thermore, since appropriate and accept-
able pragmatic behaviour is always open
to question and debate, FL interactants
should be able to employ their own critical
resources to determine how they want to
express themselves in the TL.

Pragmatic transfer has been defined
as "the tendency to use one's own native
social norms and cultural expectations
when speaking a different language" (Es-
candell-Vidal, 2018, p. 22). Although ac-
knowledged as both positive and negative,
pragmatic transfer is more often than not

described as undesirable and deleterious, For instance, Ishihara and Cohen argue that when FL users are not familiar with TL pragmatic norms

> they may consciously to unconsciously depend on the norms that apply for that situation when using first, dominant, or some other language. This influence of the learners' knowledge of other languages and cultures on their pragmatic use and development on the use of L2 is referred to as *pragmatic transfer*. Although pragmatic transfer may produce positive results, when learners' pragmatic norms are similar and applicable to the L2 (referred to as *positive* transfer), our focus here on difference will have us focus just on what has been referred to in the literature as *negative* transfer.
>
> (2010, p. 78 authors' italics)

Negative transfer may not always result from interference or pragmatic failure. Resistance and opposition may be reflected in pragmatic diversion as argued by Taguchi and Roever:

> When learners' L1 and L2 cultures do not share the same values and norms, or when learners feel resistance to L2 norms, linguistic forms that encode target norms are not practiced. In the areas of grammar and lexis, those cases are treated as instances of negative transfer or L1 interference that are largely unconscious, but in pragmatics learners make conscious decisions about whether to accept or resist tar-

> get pragmatic norms (Taguchi, 2011c).
>
> (2017,p. 165)

Consequently, pragmatic transfer needs to be seen in the context of how FL interlocutors employ their existing knowledge of the world, which will emanate from encyclopaedic knowledge, schemata, frames, and scripts.

Encyclopaedia knowledge reflects knowing how relational language is employed e.g., *Fancy seeing you here!* (phatic meaning) and *I know that you don't like to lend money, but could you make an exception because….?* (disarmer). It is important because teachers can help the FL interactant develop TL "encyclopaedia knowledge to provide a context that enables him to recover the implied meaning the speaker seeks to communicate" (Grundy, 2020, p. 78). In relational contexts, teachers can help learners identify and express concepts of supportiveness, solidarity, companionship, connection, affiliation, and concern. This may be communicated the same way as in the language learner's L1. However, strict adherence to TL practices may reinforce an ethnocentric approach that assumes that the TL is the only way of establishing, developing, and maintaining TL relationships. Furthermore, it restricts or denies the possibility of FL users expressing individuality and personality in the TL.

Schemata awareness offers an important resource for FL interactants as it helps them identify communicative focus, interactional activity, and genre (Filmore, 1981). By identifying focus, FL interactants are better positioned to understand interactional direction and communicative objectives. Interactional activity reflects discursive organ-

isation in terms of who can contribute to the interaction, along with explicit and implicit participatory choices and restrictions. Genre awareness entails identifying communicative structures, conventionally established objectives, textual purpose, and discursive practices such as repetition, parallelism and other rhetorical devices. Schemata are a valuable communicative asset because it is "a mental construct of taken-for-granted assumptions about how reality is ordered… and how communication is managed" (Widdowson, 2007, p. 132).

A frame offers an overall context to communicative activity. A frame characterises a situation and underscores the interactants' intersubjective participation (Goffman, 1974). By understanding frame, FL users are in a stronger position to appreciate how a social or transactional encounter is evolving. As argued by Tannen and Wallet, "[t]he interactive notion of frame refers to a definition of what is going on in interaction, without which no utterance (or movement or gesture) could be interpreted" (1999, p. 348).

Finally, a script predicts the possible dialogic features in an actual social or transactional encounter and reflects "the ways in which we come to expect things to happen" (Thornbury, 2005, p. 55). Scripts help FL participants to identify and understand different interactional stages since they reflect "the ways in which we come to expect things to happen" (Thornbury, 2005, p. 55).

2.5 Research question

Faced with following conventional TL politic norms and practices or acknowledging L1 patterns of use, FL teachers need to decide how to approach the teaching of politeness in the classroom. Therefore, the objectives of the study are to analyse whether teachers integrate the learners' L1 relational patterns and practices in TL politeness teaching and interaction. Furthermore, I examine the degree to which teachers promote and perhaps enforce 'Inner Circle' concepts of politeness. Research is designed to ascertain whether teachers saw their role as providing learners with pre-established resources or whether they encourage learner reflection and analysis. This article pursues the following research questions:

1. Do teachers 'teach' L1, TL or 'third way' politeness in the Mexican EFL classroom? If so, how?
2. What attitude do teachers adopt regarding the learners' own use of their L1 when engaging in TL politeness practices?

Teachers also need to consider whether the learners' L1 in TL politeness interaction acts a resource or reflects negative pragmatic transfer. Therefore, this research studies the degree to which teachers enforce 'Inner Circle' concepts of politeness.

3. Method

In order to draw out participants' approach to teaching politeness, a qualitative mode of enquiry (Brown and Dowling, 1998) is adopted to examine how instructors relate politic practices, attitudes and perceptions to pragmatics teaching. Research reflects a holistic approach to the phenomenon of teaching linguistic politeness by analysing the responses given to the questionnaires

and, subsequently, garnering insights and communicative understandings. The problematic centres on the degree to which teachers should allow learners to express their own politic understandings whilst also adhering to TL patterns and practices. This represents a mode of interrogation as teachers have choices to make regarding possible politic conflicts between the students' L1 and TL.

3.1 Participants

The specific empirical setting of this research centres on Mexican EFL teachers working in both public and private schools and language institutions in Guadalajara, Mexico. To gain insights into teaching practice, I contacted 45 EFL teachers in the Guadalajara metropolitan area in the state of Jalisco in western Mexico.

The participating teachers work in primary, secondary, and further education. They enjoy between eight and 18 years of teaching experience. They all hold a B.A. in Teaching English as a Foreign language (TEFL). Their level of English is between the CEFR's B2 and C2 levels, and when graduating from university, the teachers had to score more than 450 points on The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam. Participants are middle-class and aged between 30 and 40. The researcher personally knows all the participants.

3.2 Instrument: A semi-structured questionnaire

Teaching FL politeness as politic behaviour has often adopted a pragmalinguistic focus as instruction builds up learner resources. This stands in opposition to considering what FL interactants want to do and how

they can be helped to achieve relational objectives. Therefore, a specific framework asks how teachers can reflect on how they develop learners' politic conduct and the teachers' own position on incorporating Spanish-language practices into their students' linguistic repertoire. This mode of inquiry has led to the formulation of the following questions:

1. Do you teach your students about English-language politeness practices?
2. Do you think that politeness is just about saying 'please' and 'thank you'? Or is there something more involved?
3. Do you see English-language politeness as mainly conventional, routine and formulaic?
4. Are politeness practices the same in Spanish and English?
5. Do you think that your students should use Mexican politeness practices when speaking in English if they want to?
6. Examine the following practices, do you think there are ways of expressing any of them in English:

   - *Educado* (well-mannered)
   - *Dar una buena imagen* (give a good impression)
   - *Detallista* (being thoughtful regarding small and seemingly insignificant aspects)
   - *Atento* (attentive)
   - *Considerado* (considerate)
   - *Complaciente* (accommodating)
   - *Galante* and *caballeroso* (gentlemanly behaviour)

7. Examine the following practices, do you think there are ways of expressing any of them in English:

- *Dar su lugar* (acknowledging and recognising the social worth of others)
- *Mostrar respeto* (showing respect)
- *Hacer el bien* (doing good to others)
- *Acomedirse (*being immediately responsive to the needs of others)
- *Ser servicial* (being helpful and attentive).

8. Do you think your students willingly adopt English-language politeness practices or do they find them surprising (strange) and unusual (weird)?
9. Do you find your students questioning, resisting or even not wanting to use English-language politeness expressions?
10. What is more important? To follow English-language conventions or find one's own way to express consideration and respect towards others?

Question 1 probes teachers' overall approach to teaching politic behaviour in the language classroom. If politeness is seen as routine and formulaic, students may be given fewer opportunities to use L1 resources creatively in the TL. Teachers may even avoid dealing with non-conventional expressions of politeness. Questions 2-7 study teachers' perceptions of politeness, including whether L1 practices can be expressed or conveyed through the TL. The questions seek to identify whether teachers take on an active role in promoting learners' use of Mexican politic practices in the TL. Questions 8 to 10 focus on learner agency and subjectivity in learning politeness and ask teachers to reflect on their students' practices and possible similarities between Spanish and English. These questions probe teachers' awareness of learners' attitudes and reactions. Answers may reveal learners' willingness to embrace TL patterns and practices and investigate choices between emphasising communicative structures or encouraging learner self-expression.

3.3 Data collection procedure

Following the initial invitation, 26 teachers took part in the research. They were asked to complete a semi-structured, open-ended questionnaire on Google Forms between May and July 2023. The questionnaires were carried out in English. (See above for the specific questions.)

This research approach seeks to provide insights into teachers' awareness and attitudes and detect practices and stances regarding TL politic practices. The results will hopefully lead to a more informed teaching practice and increased learner control and individuality regarding how the learners themselves want to engage in TL relational talk.

3.4 Data analysis procedure

Answers were analysed in terms of teaching practice, perceived students' reactions, and pragmatic transfer. The results have not been quantified as such but are presented in terms of insights and points of view grouped into the above-mentioned categories. Consequently, findings have not been organised into tables or charts but rather are shown in terms of representative responses. Factors such as age and gender have not been taken into consideration due to the limited number of respondents. To

protect their privacy, teachers were assured that their answers would remain anonymous and they have all been given pseudonyms. It is important to point out that the teachers' answers have not been 'corrected' or modified in any way and, therefore, may not reflect 'Inner Circle' standard language use.

4. Results

Results from the questionnaire provide insights into how teachers perceive politic behaviour and the perceived use of L1 resources. They reflect how teachers perceive conventionality and conformity and respond to learners' perceptions and attitudes regarding TL politeness. They reflect teaching practice, teachers' perceptions of politeness, and learner agency and subjectivity.

4.1 Teaching practice

In question 1, instructors were asked whether they teach their students TL politeness practices and, if so, what they tell them and what their teaching objective is. Answers seek to identify how teachers position politeness in TL learning. Seven teachers from the outset said that they do not teach or deal with politeness with comments such as "I have never taught my students about this" (Beatriz) and "I don't really teach that kind of vocabulary since we limit our lesson plans to the content of the textbooks we are using" (Rafael). Therefore, it can be assumed that TL relational behaviour is not a focus of their teaching and politeness is not seen as an integral part of FL learning. A further six teachers saw politeness as important in terms of adhering to appropriate social behaviour e.g.,

Extract 1:
I tell them it is important for them to know how to behave in public places and particular context. Since my students are teenagers at a high school program, part of my job is to help them become better citizens, or at least try my best. (Esteban)

and

Extract 2:
I teach them to be polite, say please and thank you, greet, when necessary, simple phrases. I believe being polite to others shows respect and well-educated children. (Teresa)

Teachers in extracts 1 and 2 promote politeness as expected behaviour and position politeness as key to everyday interaction and a way to be a good citizen. Students can, therefore, be seen to follow first-language scripts using their encyclopaedia knowledge. A further six teachers see the need to highlight politeness practices to compare and contrast cultural differences e.g.,

Extract 3:
Yes, I do it for cultural awareness. A good way is by showing examples real life situations. Like how they would approach to that situation. (Pablo)

and

Extract 4:
I do it for them to be aware of cultural differences regarding politeness. (Bernardo)

Teachers in extracts 3 and 4 are aware of behavioural differences and potentially build on learners' knowledge and experience when engaging in TL communication. Such approaches ask learners to notice and be alert to cultural differences so that learners can compare and contrast L1 and TL practices. Teachers, therefore, are attempting to build on learners' schematic knowledge.

Only two teachers (see extracts 5 and 6) regarded politeness as a resource to navigate different communicative contexts and situations:

Extract 5:
I tell them they must be prepared to interact in different situations. (Antonia)

Extract 6:
When I have the chance of doing it, I tell them that there are expressions or actions that might be considered as rude and that there are other ways of saying what they want while being polite. So, I present them as options for them. (David)

Answers to question 1 indicate that teachers take different approaches towards politeness, with few teachers seeing politeness as an important way of establishing, developing, and maintaining TL relationships in order to achieve and consolidate successful and meaningful interaction.

4.2 Teachers' perceptions of politeness
The second question explores the idea of politeness as being *educado* and well-mannered and whether it should be seen in terms of saying 'please' and 'thank you'. It scrutinises the possibility of transferring Mexican politic conduct (e.g., good manners and courteous behaviour) to the FL classroom. Whilst four respondents did consider politeness in terms of 'please' and 'thank you,' the vast majority saw it as something more. As previously mentioned, *mostrar respeto* (showing respect) reflects an important 'script' of politic conduct and was highlighted in the teachers' answers, e.g.,

Extract 7:
I believe politeness goes beyond certain expressions. Things such as showing respect, manners, etc. play an important role in being polite. (Esteban)

Extract 8:
I think that politeness is about addressing someone with respect, so it is much more complex than just saying "Please" or "Thank you". The phrases that one uses depend on the formality of the conversation, and how close you are to the person you are talking to. I believe that each conversation between two or more people requires a whole different usage of the language depending on the context. (Camila)

Teachers' responses in extracts 7 and 8 indicate that respect can be closely associated with manners, formality and social distance, and being *educado*.

Perhaps because they were language teachers, eight respondents gave a strong structural element to politeness, e.g.,

Extract 9:
> There is much more involved. Politeness impacts on the way sentences and statements are formulated, the intonation, and the non-verbal communication such as gestures and sometimes even a gentle physical touch. (Eva)

Extract 10:
> There are many things involved. The easiest to identify could be the intonation along with gestures / body language. The modals we choose are also very important. Speakers also need to have cultural knowledge to avoid being rude. (Isabella)

The nonverbal element, as seen in the above answers in extracts 9 and 10, is an important consideration in Mexican politic behaviour as underscored by Rafael: "I think it is also about the way you speak (not asking for things in a demanding way), and also with the movement of our hands when we want to transmit something".

However, two teachers (see extracts 11 and 12) recognised an interactional element to polite behaviour which perhaps represents a departure from promoting expected behaviour to taking into consideration contextual aspects:

Extract 11:
> It can go from what is appropriate to say at specific times / moments / situations or when is best to avoid bringing something up to body language. (Dafne)

Extract 12:
> There are many different communicative events, such as asking questions, giving an opinion, making a request, giving suggestions, how to say no that by adding a specific set of words / phrases can make a big difference in which the message is delivered and understood. For example, there is a big difference between: "Turn the lights off" and "Could you please turn the lights off?" (Gloria)

Another two respondents (see extracts 13 and 14) went beyond examining politic behaviour to considering politeness in more interpersonal terms:

Extract 13:
> There are a lot of aspects involved: hierarchy, context, closeness, etc. (Axel)

Extract 14:
> There is something more like tone of voice, body language, closeness or familiarity to express certain expressions with known or unknown people. (Miguel)

Answers to question two seem to reflect Mexican Spanish-language understandings of politic behaviour – both verbal and nonverbal. However, there is little acknowledgment of the individual's role in constructing and developing interactional and interpersonal relationships.

Question three probed the notion of whether politic conduct is formulaic and routine (and can be studied in terms of frames and scripts) or if there is a more individualistic and creative dimension. As previously mentioned, politic behaviour can demonstrate a personal or interpersonal

dimension. Eleven respondents see TL politeness as conventional and predictable e.g.,

Extract 15:
> I think conventional since it is ordinary like accepted kind nicely behaviors. (Pablo)

Extract 16:
> Since we learn target vocabulary with contextualized information. Teaching politeness would go in that formulaic category. (Rafael)

Such observations in extracts 15 and 16 may reflect textbook treatment of politeness, which is often presented in terms of conventional grammatical and lexical structures, e.g., politeness markers, modal verbs, and use of indirect language.

In contrast, dynamic aspects were underscored by two respondents who commented on the ubiquitousness of politeness seemingly referring to politeness in the context of a frame:

Extract 17:
> There are thousands of situations and contexts that could determine if a speaker is being polite. (Isabella)

Extract 18:
> Politeness is everywhere. It might be conversational, transactional, or even when sending an email. (Fabiola)

These responses in extracts 17 and 18 reflect the image of politeness as a practice in its own right rather than as an add-on to make communication sound more well-mannered and courteous. At the same time, politeness was invariably seen as a mixture of formulaic and routine aspects, as can be seen in extracts 19 and 20:

Extract 19:
> There are some conventions that are expected, but it also takes some intuition and wit "to read the room" and act appropriately. (Bernardo)

Extract 20:
> [Politeness] is helpful to establish social interaction. On the other hand when introducing politeness to students in the language classroom, then yes, it can be presented as something formulaic as there are specific chunks of language that help our students apply politeness in different communicative contexts. (Gloria)

The answers to question three seem to reinforce the idea that politic behaviour reflects formulaic, routine and contextually appropriate behaviour which presumably results from encyclopaedia knowledge. On the other hand, responses did not underscore an individualistic dimension.

Question four examines whether teachers feel that politeness practices are the same in Spanish and English. Answers would help identify cross-cultural pragmatic aspects of teaching politeness, especially in terms of positive and negative pragmatic transfer.

Similarities were found by 13 respondents, as can be seen in extracts 21 and 22:

Extract 21:
> I think that the speakers of both languages have the same basis for polite-

ness which is respect. Basing on that value, it is obvious that the speakers will use the appropriate phrases and non-verbal behaviors to achieve politeness. (Beatriz)

Extract 22:
Yes, we apply politeness practices whether we do it using Spanish or English, it's intentions are the same, however there can be certain ones that don´t have the same meaning in Spanish or English speaking countries. (Teresa)

Differences were found by eleven participants, which were described as cultural differences, as can be seen in extracts 23 and 24:

Extract 23:
Due to cultural differences, Spanish and English politenesses are two completely worlds apart. Spanish speakers tend to be friendlier since the very beginning while English speakers tend to be a little bit more formal. (Fabiola)

Extract 24:
English cultures tend to be more straightforward with their wishes. This might be perceived as rude for sensitive Latinos. Spanish speakers tend to use a lot more of politeness expressions and they might be annoying for some. (Bernardo)

Besides cultural differences, participants also highlighted interactional differences, as can be seen in extracts 25 and 26:

Extract 25:
Politeness in English could be seen as too straight-forward in Spanish; meanwhile, politeness in Spanish could seem evasive to English speakers. (Eva)

Extract 26:
I think that in English the objective is to be respectful but at the same time keeping a distance. In Spanish we are more open and cooperative. Also a big difference in speaking polite Spanish is the use of "usted". (Antonia)

The answers indicate that similar and contrasting politeness patterns and practices were not seen in terms of positive and negative transfer but approached along linguistic, interactional, and cultural dimensions.

Question five directly asked teachers whether their students should employ Mexican politeness schemata and practices when speaking in English. The question pursued the idea of positive, pragmatic transfer with respect to politeness. This question probed the degree of individuality – or at least cultural distinctiveness. A significant number of teachers (10) felt it is contingent on the context as can be seen in extracts 27 and 28:

Extract 27:
Obviously it depends on who they are interacting with, but in the end, I think it is a good practice to be polite at all times. (Rafael)

Extract 28:
I think that my students can also use Mexican politeness practices in

English, but they should be aware in which context they are doing so. For this, they have to first know the politeness practices in English and understand their importance. In this sense, they would be able to recognize that there might be certain practices that could be considered as inappropriate. (David)

Only four teachers expressed outright opposition to the use of L1 practices, as can be seen in extracts 29 and 30:

Extract 29:

Mmm no, another language, another culture. (Pedro)

Extract 30:

No because some practices are not the same or can even be seen as not appropriate for English speakers. (Carmen)

However, two respondents (extracts 31 and 32) felt that the use of Mexican politeness should be transitional rather than a possible characteristic of TL interaction:

Extract 31:

It's a good start (better than nothing), but I prefer to make them aware of the differences from the beginning, so they learn it that way and get used to it at an early stage. It facilitates their learning process in the long-term. (Eva)

Extract 32:

It is hard to separate, since it is ingrained in the language system, but once the new culture is a little bit more

understood, then it is possible to use the target manners. (Bernardo)

Overall, most respondents did not envisage a problem in employing Mexican politeness practices. Two teachers (extracts 33 and 34) did not even see a difference between Mexican and English-language politeness:

Extract 33:

Yes, in general, politeness is universal – I think that Mexican politeness practice has cross over and similarities. (Esteban)

Extract 34:

Yes. Most Mexican and English politeness practices are alike. I do not believe they could go into any trouble if they use them in any context. (Lucia)

These answers suggest that these teachers do not see a marked difference in terms of schema and frame between Mexican and TL politeness practices.

Question six asked teachers to examine whether specific everyday expected Mexican politic practices could be expressed in English. These were: *Educado* (well-mannered); *Dar una buena imagen* (give a good impression); *Detallista* (thoughtful over small details and considerate of others' needs by giving them small gifts); *Atento* (attentive); *Considerado* (considerate); *Complaciente* (accommodating); and *Galante* and *caballeroso* (gentlemanly behaviour). Teachers were asked to reflect on whether any specific Mexican politic practices were carried out in the TL. Answers (as can be seen in ex-

tracts 35 and 36) can be divided into formulaic lists such as:

Extract 35:
> *Atento*: After you *Considerado*: Can I offer you some help? *Dar una buena impresión*: Good Morning. My name is _____ it is my pleasure to meet you… (Carmen)

Extract 36:
> *Educado* (saying 'please' and 'thank you'); *Dar una buena imagen* (smiling and remembering someone else's name on the first interaction); *Detallista* (remembering a time when someone expressed wanting something and when having another interaction with that person giving that thing he/she expressed wanting); *Atento* (listening to the details someone expresses about an anecdote); *Complaciente* (offering a beverage when someone arrives to your home); *Galante y caballeroso* (giving up your seat to a woman). (Beatriz)

Such an approach assumes that Mexican politic expressions can be directly translated into the TL, which would undermine the argument that Mexican politic conduct varies from that of the TL. This stance would appear to contradict previous teachers' answers that warned against using translation. However, it is important to note that respondents especially see Mexican politic behaviour in terms of acts and not just words (as can be seen in extracts 37 and 38):

Extract 37:

Well mannered is definitely more about saying "please and thank you". Attentive is more about your actions, like when you are hosting a meeting and you make sure everyone's needs are met. When you're being thoughtful is more about that extra you give for another person without them expecting it. So I wouldn't say is all about language. (Dafne)

Extract 38:
> I find "*detallista*", "*atento*", "*complaciente*" and "*galante*" as the most difficult ones. For detallista you could say that is someone who likes to give gifts to others, flowers, chocolates, or anything. For *atento* you could say that is a caring person, as for *complaciente* you can say that it's someone who spoils someone a lot in general. And finally galante to me is different to *caballeroso*. *Galante* means being handsome and *caballeroso* is being a gentleman. (Sara)

The fact that participants resorted to translation perhaps underscores the difficulties of conveying Mexican politic practices in the TL.

Question seven asked teachers whether super-politic conduct could be expressed in English. As previously discussed, super-politic is anticipated behaviour that reflects extra interactional effort and consideration. Teachers were asked to consider the following: *Dar su lugar* (recognising others' social worth); *Mostrar respeto* (showing respect); *Hacer el bien* (doing good to others); *Acomedirse (*being immediately responsive to the needs of others without being asked

to help); and *Ser servicial* (being helpful and attentive).

Responses (see extracts 39 and 40) reflected a socially instilled element in super-politic practices, which reflected key words such as social status, respect, and helpfulness, e.g.,

Extract 39:
> Sustaining social status of others might be executed less in English culture, and "acomedirse" more common in the Spanish culture. It's something taught since we, Mexicans, are kids. (Sara)

Extract 40:
> *Dar su lugar*: Know one's place. Mostrar respeto: Being respectful. *Hacer el bien*: Make good deeds. *Acomedirse*: Make oneself useful. *Ser servicial*: I think being helpful, as the example. (Sofia)

The super-politic element can be seen in terms of appropriately positioning oneself with respect to others and recognising the primacy of their needs and wants over and above those of oneself.

However, interactants (see extracts 41 and 42) struggled to express super-politic conduct in English, e.g.,

Extract 41:
> I think it would be difficult to give an exact translation of these practices, but there might be some words or expressions close in meaning. For example, 'ser servicial' can be explained with the idioms "a helping hand" or "a heart of gold". (Adriana)

Extract 42:
> I found it really hard to find ways of expressing those in English. (Gloria)

So whilst recognising super-politic performance in the learners' L1, teachers found it difficult to convey and formulate the expression to such politeness practices in the TL.

4.3 Learner agency and subjectivity

Question eight switched the research focus to the teachers' perceptions of learners' understandings of FL politeness. Answers attempted to gauge teachers' awareness of learners' attitudes and reactions. Whilst having their own understandings and perceptions of polite behaviour, teachers may not see how their students approach TL politeness.

In response to question eight, teachers saw learners willingly adopt English-language politeness practices. Five teachers thought that their students adapted easily (as can be seen in extracts 43 and 44)

Extract 43:
> I've noticed that my students adopt it easily because most of the practices are quite similar to the ones in Mexico or their social environments. (Carmen)

Extract 44:
> I think it is willingly because it is more like "following the rules". And it is good when teaching adults how they can go back forth with comparing previous experiences about how they would react in certain situations. (Pablo)

However, three teachers (see extracts 45 and 46) commented that learners often see TL politeness practices as strange at first due to the novelty factor. This may be because they do not fit into the L1 schemata, e.g.,

Extract 45:
> Some students tend to find it strange; some students tend to find them amusing because of it being new/different. (Dafne)

Extract 46:
> At the beginning they may find it strange, since many phrases may seem so different to their native language; however, as they continue studying and practicing English, I believe they start to adopt English language politeness practices in a natural way as they have more vocabulary at their disposal. (Camila)

Rather than dealing with learners' own perceptions and understandings, three teachers focused on getting learners to adopt and/or adapt to TL politeness patterns and practices (as can be seen in extracts 47 and 48):

Extract 47:
> Students tend to resort to their native culture at the beginning and then adopt that of the target language, I think. (Bernardo)

Extract 48:
> I think once they stop trying to translate everything and just surround themselves with the language in a social context. (Sofia)

These students seem to relate politeness practices to their L1 schemata. However, the respondents themselves did not consider that L1 schemata, experiences, and knowledge play an important role in how learners approach TL politeness.

However, one teacher (extract 49) felt that she had to deal with learner resistance and opposition:

Extract 49:
> Younger students have more of sense of self nowadays so they question many practices that they could consider old fashioned or not necessary since they can chat and interact with people from all over the world since they were kids. (Berta)

Answers to question eight suggest that teachers are more focused on getting learners to adopt and conform to TL practices rather than seeing learners as individuals who approach the TL with their own encyclopaedia knowledge, frames, schemata and scripts. Teachers can be seen as trying to impose 'Inner Circle' norms.

Question nine directly asks teachers whether they see students questioning, resisting or even not wanting to use English-language politeness expressions. Resistance and opposition may be important considerations that are overlooked in FL teaching and misinterpreted and misconstrued as learner mistakes and errors. At the same time, this question sought to identify how teachers positioned themselves

regarding opposition and resistance. The majority of teachers (16) did not detect any signs of opposition or resistance (as can be seen in extracts 50 and 51)

Extract 50:
> No, luckily, I had really good students and actually they also asked us to tell them politeness expressions quite often. (Adriana)

Extract 51:
> I've never had that feeling about them. I've never seen or heard them complaining about using or asking them to use politeness expressions. (Rafael)

Resisting can be seen as 'negative' behaviour as teachers expect learners to adhere to 'Inner Circle' norms.

Four teachers were aware of negative reactions from their students (as can be seen in extracts 52 and 53):

Extract 52:
> Questioning yes, especially when it is a word or phrase that they do not find the word in Spanish to relate it to. (Berta)

Extract 53:
> Yes. Sometimes they feel weird because they compare expressions to their native language. (Sofia)

Some expressions of resistance were not directly related to language learning but reflected educational and personal problems (see extracts 54 and 55):

Extract 54:
> They question and resist polite expressions in their L1. It has become more and more difficult to help students understand that it would suit them better to behave in certain ways in certain contexts. (Esteban)

Extract 55:
> There are some secondary school learners that resist learning due to personal problems, some dislike school, or feel no motivated to study. (Miguel)

However, three teachers sought to overcome resistance (see extracts 56 and 57):

Extract 56:
> Sometimes they make comments on how they find them weird but they "accept" them. (Axel)

Extract 57:
> Most of them don't resist, because in the end their goal is to reach something close to a native-like level. (Eva)

Findings from question 9 indicate that teachers do not face – or perhaps recognise -- resistance and opposition and, when they did, it was to be overcome rather than be understood and discussed in the classroom.

Question ten explored FL users' choice between following English-language conventions and 'scripts' or learners expressing their own ways of conveying politic behaviour in the TL. Answers reflected teachers' objectives in encouraging learners to communicate consideration and respect, and they privileged students' own

schemata (e.g., experiences, attitudes, and beliefs) rather than advocating mere adherence to TL structures. Ten respondents definitely felt that relational factors were more important (as can be seen in extracts 58 and 59):

Extract 58:
> I believe to find one's own way to express consideration and respect towards others. As teachers it would be nice and ideal to explain students that there are certain contexts in which some expressions or manners would suit the situation better than in others. (Esteban)

Extract 59:
> I believe that finding one's ways to express consideration and respect towards others is the best way since within that specific people you'll find what's right and what is not. (Beatriz)

However, the other 16 participants called for a balance between conventions and individuality. Four respondents felt that convention was the basis from which to branch out (as can be seen in extracts 60 and 61):

Extract 60:
> Once the foundations of a second language are solid then it would be natural to follow one's way or even find a natural balance. (Dafne)

Extract 61:
> Yes, you should know the English-language conventions, especially people who are learning the language, but as

they grow in knowledge and vocabulary, to me the second option works as well. (Adriana)

The idea of teaching/learning conventions in the initial encounter may make pedagogical sense as learners concentrate on gaining familiarity with TL structures. However, there is a danger that learners only see politeness in conventional and formulaic terms and do not find their own ways of expressing politic behaviour.

The results indicate that teachers all too often adhere to TL politic practices and patterns, and they seem to offer limited opportunities and resources for their students to engage in TL politic practices in their own ways or through making reference to their L1 assets and experiences.

5. Discussion

Results from examining teaching practice, teachers' perceptions of politeness, and learner agency indicate that FL teachers are faced with choices and decisions regarding how they want to approach the teaching/learning of politeness in the classroom. Consciously or not, teachers take a pedagogical position: They can decide to actively engage students with TL relational patterns and practices whilst considering the role of the learners' L1 communicative resources, or they may see TL politeness as pre-determined and pre-patterned.

5.2 Teaching practice

A significant number of teachers see a limited need to teach politeness as it is not envisaged to be particularly relevant to their teaching context. Obviously more research

is needed into how teachers define politeness and relate to TL politeness practices and patterns. This appears to be especially relevant as teaching practices as described in this research are more focused on the structural aspects of language rather than the interpersonal dimension. Teachers often adopted a politic approach in promoting expected everyday 'Inner Circle' conduct. Teachers did not generally take into consideration learners' L1 linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic knowledge in the teaching of TL politeness. They engage in promoting comparative practices rather than in considering that politeness may not be viewed in the same way in the L1 and the TL. Those teachers who did compare the L1 and TL recognised learners' own knowledge and experience and utilised them as a means of being polite in the TL. Answers indicate that politeness is seen in terms of appropriate and expected conduct rather than as a way of enhancing interpersonal and transaction relationships.

5.2 Teachers' perceptions of politeness

Whilst politeness may not be taught overtly, teachers recognised that appropriate behaviour went beyond saying *please* and *thank you*. Nevertheless, a conflict may result between TL practices and the Mexican politic focus on respect, manners, formality, and being *educado*. An emphasis on nonverbal aspects indicates that teachers do not see instruction in purely linguistic terms, although there was a strong focus on the use of modal verbs and appropriate sentence structure. However, few respondents highlighted the interactional or interpersonal dimensions of politeness, which may reflect L1 politic understandings in terms of expected behaviour. Teachers appeared to reflect a limited view of the use of politeness in developing, enhancing, and consolidating TL relationships, which could be achieved by perhaps examining and reflecting on a much more personal dimension of TL politeness practices. Indeed teachers seemed to miss an opportunity to compare the conventional and prepatterned approach to politeness with a possible creative and individualistic dimension. Lack of awareness and the failure to promote interpersonal choice limited politic behaviour to the routine and the ordinary. Rather than merely seeing TL politeness as conventional and routine in terms of frames and scripts, teachers could have examined how learners could appropriate for themselves politeness practices through pragmatic transfer or combine their L1 and even establish a third way (Cohen, 2018; Kramsch, 1993). This may give learners a greater sense of ownership of the TL. As argued in this paper, pragmatic transfer can and should be seen just as much as a communicative asset rather than a source of possible interference from the learners' L1 in the TL.

Whilst considering English and Spanish politeness practices, teachers focused more on similarities and contrasts rather than on seeing whether L1 understandings could be used as a way of developing TL abilities and skills. This is an important dimension to FL learning as learners build on existing frames of understanding. So whilst linguistic, interactional, and cultural differences raise important distinctions, L1 knowledge and experiences are not suffi-

ciently taken advantage of and exploited in developing TL proficiency. Furthermore, cultural comparisons offer the opportunity to explore positive, pragmatic transfer that can build up learner confidence and reduce a sense of strangeness and difference often associated with FL learning.

Teachers also did not reflect on the possible use of Mexican politeness practices in the TL that might have allowed learners to express their L1 identity and agency. The use of Mexican politeness practices can help learners establish a degree of individuality and personality in the TL. By contrast, teachers only considered L1 politeness patterns to be appropriate in applicable contextual circumstances. Teachers did not envisage the use of Mexican politeness practices as a possible productive expression of personality and individuality.

Teachers had little difficulty in recognising the different categories of Mexican politic practices and supported the idea of expressing Mexican politeness in the TL. However, teachers seemed at a loss as to how to achieve this. Teachers did not appear to be able to help their students develop a unique Mexican dimension to TL relational behaviour that would allow them to come across as proficient and knowledgeable FL language users with a strong component of Mexican expressiveness. Teachers need to make connections between Mexican politic and TL politic practices as a way of individualising and enriching their students' TL interaction. Teachers recognised the difficulty of expressing super-politic conduct in the TL but they all too often ended up translating the words from Spanish and hoping that TL interactants would understand a Mexican sociocultural component. This offers an area of communicative opportunity for Mexican EFL learners through which they can highlight their own sociocultural ways of appreciating and reinforcing interpersonal relationships. Once again, teachers were challenged in trying to convey and formulate such expressions in the TL. As teachers seem to be reduced to translating expressions, a decision needs to be taken on whether both Mexican politic and super-politic patterns and practices can really be expressed in the TL.

5.3 Learner agency and subjectivity

The pedagogic possibility of developing learners' understandings of FL politeness reflects another lost opportunity for teachers as they seem more focused on overcoming possible learner resistance and opposition to TL politeness practices rather than on considering how learners could express their own relational behaviour in the TL. Teachers need to define and implement their own position vis-à-vis Mexican politeness patterns and practices and the TL. Learners could have been helped to conform to standard practices whilst still also maintaining an element of individuality and even creativity. Students could be encouraged to study, understand, and take advantage of TL frames, schemata, and scripts. Such an approach casts teachers as an interactive (and even creative) resource in TL use. In this way, learners can be given the means, if they wish, to diverge from conventional patterns and practices and establish their own way of presenting themselves in the TL.

Responses and reactions to possible opposition and resistance suggest that teachers do not see these as issues that need to be faced, worked on, and perhaps resolved. It may be too easy to focus on correcting learners' mistakes and errors and, consequently, misinterpret and misconstrue underlying signs of resistance and opposition. Teaching politeness seems to reflect a structural approach rather than a discursive one that examines situational and contextual aspects that provide choices that will allow the FL users to project themselves in the way that they want to. Rather than considering that learners' challenges and questioning could provide the basis for constructing more meaningful FL interaction, teachers seem to merely want to overcome dissent and contestation. Indeed, teachers seem to opt for conventionality and conformity rather than learner self-expression. Convention offers safe ground and tried-and-trusted communicative paths. However, FL learners may want to focus more on expressing their own culture and perhaps their individuality. This would mean allowing learners to take greater possession of their own politic practices and patterns in the TL. Students should be able to decide for themselves whether they incorporate L1 resources or only adopt TL practices. Teachers would have a key role to play in facilitating this process.

The paper suffers from a number of limitations, starting with the sample size of only 26 teachers and that the findings represent self-reporting. Whilst the answers appear to correlate with each other, triangulation with learners' own perceptions of the teaching of politeness can provide greater insights into L2 politic conduct, opposition, and resistance. Furthermore, it would allow teachers to identify learners' interpersonal and relational aims and objectives when engaging in relational work. Another limitation is that the research only focuses on the Guadalajara metropolitan area. Further research is needed to determine whether these findings apply to a wide teacher population.

6. Conclusion

This small-scale and limited research suggests that Mexican EFL teachers present and practise prescriptive politic behaviour with their students. Whilst teachers accept that politeness goes beyond formulaic expressions, there is little indication that they take into consideration a CEFR focus on 'positive' politeness and 'negative' politeness which could provide opportunities to explore learner self-expression. This would offer the possibility of integrating Mexican politic conduct into TL interaction. At the same time, teachers still need to consider how FL users may oppose and resist convention and tradition as they seek out their own ways of conveying politic conduct in the TL. Teachers may attempt to do this by encouraging learners to examine whether 'Inner Circle' normative practices allow them to express politeness and consequently explore ways to confront possible hurdles and obstacles. This will involve learners in identifying and constructing pragmalinguistic and pragmalinguistic resources which may include pragmatic transfer from their L1. Since TL politic behaviour may not reflect learners' values, beliefs and attitudes, teachers should act as involved

and engaged resources that offer students realistic choices when engaging in TL relational behaviour. Rather than focusing on what politic knowledge and assets can do

for FL users, teachers can help interactants to participate in the way they want to whilst cognisant of TL practices and norms of behaviour.

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