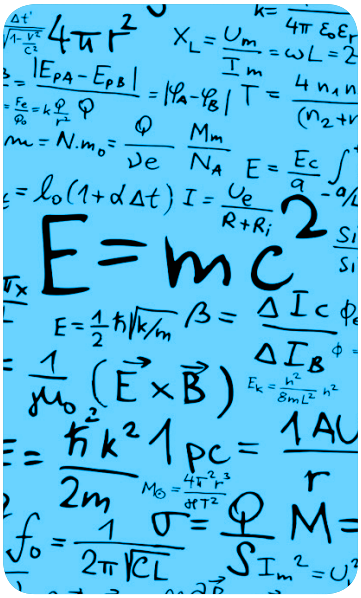

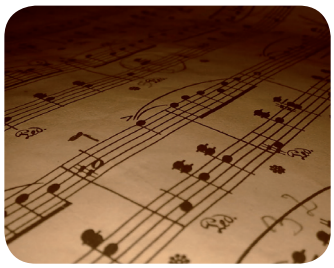

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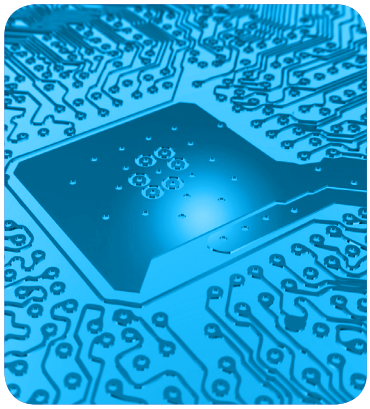

Linguistic Politeness in Asynchronous Telecollaboration

María Sagrado Martín

UAM EDICIONES

Abstract

The present study aims to research the nature of linguistic politeness in on-line exchanges via wiki. It departs from Brown and Levinson's influential politeness model and analyzes, under this framework, the use of politeness strategies that different groups of university students make while working in collaboration. The specific objectives of this study include: a) to determine the predominant type of politeness strategy used in this kind of exchanges, b) to establish a possible relationship between politeness, interaction and collaboration and c) to identify similarities and differences in the use of politeness between two asynchronous on-line communication tools: wikis and e-mails. In order to attain these goals, a corpus of student exchanges was created and annotated manually by using the UAM-CorpusTool. Additionally, some statistical tests were implemented, which were later reinforced by qualitative analyses and observations. The most relevant results include first, that students in this study use both positive and negative politeness strategies, with a relatively small predominance of the former, as well as isolated samples of on- and off- politeness strategies. Second, that different discourse functions relate to different politeness devices; third, that politeness strategies, independently of their type, have an impact on collaboration, and fourth, that the differences or similarities between asynchronous tools do not depend on the tools themselves, but on the discourse functions fulfilled in the messages.

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1. Introduction

Collaborative learning has become a methodological centerpiece during the last years, as a consequence of the current trend that supports the advantages of the sociocultural approach to learning. This approach was developed in the first half of the 20th century by Vygotsky (1997), who posited that human beings construct knowledge by interacting with others in social and cultural practices. Collaboration, thus, implies a situation in which two or more participants learn together and are responsible for developing knowledge, while the teacher's role is mainly to facilitate the learning process (Dillenbourg, 1999). As claimed by Donato (2004), the results of collaboration are mainly two: the creation of new knowledge and group growth. This new knowledge will go "beyond any knowledge possessed by a single member in isolation" (p.287), so it will be richer and complex. In addition, he highlights the social relationships which develop within the group as a result of working towards a common goal. Learners bond and can distinguish each other as members of the same group.

Computer-mediated collaborative learning allows learners to work together without the need of being physically present. Van Nguyen (2010), in relation to this, affirms that "online interaction environments, which involve active construction of knowledge, can be potentially used as a powerful tool for collaborative learning and group communication" (p.221). Besides, Graham & Misanchuk (2004) compile the benefits of online group collaboration, concluding that it encourages negotiation of meaning, re-conceptualization of previous knowledge, motivation to learn, high quality decision making and reasoning, general cognitive development, creativity, reduction of anxiety and creation of learning communities. Kaye (1989), in turn, declares that computer-mediated collaborative learning fosters more evenly distributed turn-taking and also more thoughtful inputs in comparison with face-to-face collaborative learning.

Nevertheless, even though this learning paradigm is considered highly appropriate and beneficial by many experts, the existence of successful collaboration will depend greatly on the social interaction that occurs between the members of the group. Accordingly, Kreijns et al. (2004) maintain that the development of a 'sound social space' (p.156) is crucial, since it promotes dialogue and interaction. In other words, members in an online collaboration project need to have a feeling of mutual trust and respect towards the members of the group, as well as to sense they belong to a (learning) community.

In order to create this sound social space, members of a collaborative group make choices in the way they interact. One of those choices refers to the use of politeness strategies, which help learners avoid misunderstandings while creating a favorable atmosphere. This claim is supported by Park (2008), who points out that linguistic politeness is a helpful instrument for studying interaction, both in face-to-face and computer-mediated contexts. Politeness, therefore, is critical to computer-mediated collaborative learning, since collaboration frequently implies acts that might threaten the participants' self-image or face, such as disagreeing, requesting clarifications, providing feedback to other people's contributions or expressing opinions. Morand & Ocker (2003) summarize this issue by affirming that "face threatening acts are unavoidable, in computer-mediated communication no less than in face-to-face" (p.4).

The members of an online collaboration group are mutually dependent and responsible and this situation makes them vulnerable, so they rely on interacting successfully in order to be able to cooperate (Vinagre, 2008). In addition, online exchanges lack non-verbal communication clues (Carlo & Yoo, 2007), which increases the importance that politeness plays in avoiding misunderstandings and in enriching the restricted nature of computer-mediated communication.

There are still few studies that endeavor to analyze the role of politeness in computer-mediated communication, and their number is even more reduced if we narrow the focus down to those that employ wikis as collaboration environments. Carlo & Yoo (2007) refer to this lack of previous research by stating that "past research on computer-mediated communication has focused on material characteristics of media, social factors, the sense making process and the structural elements of text" (p.197). They also mention that virtually none of them has aimed to examine the linguistic strategies used in computer- mediated communication. For this reason, the purpose of this study is to investigate the use of politeness strategies used in asynchronous collaborative exchanges via wiki. By applying Brown & Levinson's (1987) renowned politeness model to the wiki-mediated exchanges provided by seven groups of undergraduate students in a collaborative project, we aim to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: Do students who collaborate online through wikis employ politeness strategies to mitigate possible face threats? If so, what type predominates?
- RQ2: Are there significant differences in the use of politeness strategies among the different groups? Do they have a clear impact on the members' interaction and collaboration processes?
- RQ3: Does the use of politeness strategies in wiki-mediated exchanges differ when compared to exchanges via other asynchronous on-line communication tools, such as e-mail?

Regarding the first research question, we assume the hypothesis that positive politeness strategies will be more abundant on the basis of previous research on the topic. On the one hand, Vinagre's study on e-mail exchanges (2008) identified that participants used mostly positive politeness strategies, which she attributed to the participants' need to create "solidarity, like-mindedness and friendship" (p.1031). On the other hand, Morand and

Ocker's (2003) postulates also support this hypothesis. They state that there are two core criteria that guide human interaction: being clear and, at the same time, being polite. In this sense, they consider positive politeness strategies as more adequate to fulfill those requirements, since negative politeness implies indirectness and, hence, ambiguity. Positive politeness strategies, they claim, allow participants to maintain accuracy while avoiding face threats by using expressions of affection and closeness.

As for the second research question, we relied on several assumptions. The first of them is that the more participation and interaction we will find in a wiki, the more collaborative the final product will be. The second implies that, as politeness is inherent to human interaction, even in online contexts, we will find more politeness in those wikis that have more comments in the discussion section. Finally, and based on these previous assumptions, we determined that there might be a relation between number of politeness strategies employed in each wiki (including, therefore, also interaction) and number of editions of the conclusion page, which can be used as an indicator for collaboration.

Additionally, we believe that in the case that some differences may be found in the use of politeness by the members of the different wikis analyzed, those differences will have a significant impact on the success or failure of their members' interaction and collaboration, due to the outstanding role that politeness plays in those processes. As Park (2008) asserts: an "analysis and a subsequent understanding of socio-interpersonal communication are critical to the fostering of successful interaction and collaboration. Linguistic politeness theory is well positioned to provide a framework for analyzing social interaction and interpersonal variables among discourse participants" (p.2058). In this sense, the analysis of linguistic politeness will be useful for us to determine which groups were able to engage in favorable interaction and collaboration and which ones were not capable of it, failing to create and maintain a sound social space.

Finally, concerning the third research question, we consider that we will find some differences in the use of politeness strategies when comparing the results of this study with the results of Vinagre's (2008) research on politeness in e-mail exchanges. This is due to the different discourse functions that the on-line exchanges need to fulfill in each study. Schallert et al. (2009) show that the use of politeness depends greatly on the existence of certain discourse functions, such as sharing experiences, seeking information or explaining ideas, among others. Also, they pointed out that some of these discourse functions tend to use more positive politeness strategies, while others are more intimately related to negative politeness strategies. Hence, our assumption is that the main discourse functions of introductory e-mails differ notably from those occurring in wiki discussions, and this divergence will affect the nature of the politeness strategies used in both studies.

This study begins with a review of the relevant literature in chapter two, starting with the state of the art on the use of wikis as tools for online collaboration. Next, it presents Brown and Levinson's (1987) premises on politeness, which will serve as the methodological framework to carry out the analysis of politeness strategies of the present study. The literature review will end with an examination of previous research studies on politeness in computer-mediated environments so as to provide a summary of the results obtained so far in this area. In chapter three we will introduce the methodology used to gather and analyze the data obtained and chapter four will present the results of the study. Finally, in chapter five we offer a brief conclusion which summarizes the main findings attained, incorporating also implications, limitations and suggestions for further research.

2. Theoretical background

2.1.Wiki-mediated collaborative learning

Wikis, together with blogs, podcasts or RSS belong to the Web 2.0 tools, a relatively recent generation of technologies that has received the label of 'social software', since they are

regarded as highly suitable to allow users to work in collaboration and develop Web content which becomes ready to be accessible to the public (Alexander, 2006). Even though the first wiki was created in 1995 (Lund, 2008), this tool did not become internationally popular until the apparition of Wikipedia in 2001. As Web 2.0 technologies have become increasingly recognized and prevailing, many teachers and scholars have endeavored to investigate their benefits and the different ways in which they can be incorporated into the educational context. According to Lee (2010), wikis "have grown in popularity to support collaborative learning and writing instruction" (p.260). In fact, most authors agree on the collaborative nature of wikis and its suitability to foster student interaction. Gilbert & Chen (2008), for instance, affirm that "wikis are by design participatory, collaborative, and engaging, and therefore they have great potential for community building" (p.87). Parker & Chao (2007), in turn, describe wikis as enhancers of peer interaction, group work and cooperation as opposed to competition. They also claim that wikis gather all the qualities of a "successful community of practice, including a virtual presence, a variety of interactions, easy participation, valuable content, connections to a broader subject field, personal and community identity and interaction, democratic participation, and evolution over time" (p.58). All these aspects promote more powerful collaboration.

These advantages are mainly a result of the unique characteristics that make wikis an excellent collaborative tool. First, and unlike blogs, the organization of their content is not chronological, but by content (Huang & Nakazawa, 2010) and focus on the group instead of on the individual (Maxwell & Felczak, 2008). Wikis also allow participants to create and edit content freely (Li, 2012) by employing a "user-friendly interface" (Coniam & Lee, 2008, p.53). Furthermore, they include "a system that records each individual change that occurs over time, so that at any time a page can be forced to revert to any of its previous states" (Parker & Chao, 2007, p.58) and, consequently, they give users the ability to monitor changes

and contributions. Likewise, the 'discussion' function allows users to communicate asynchronously, as well as to "collaboratively solve problems at their own pace, provide instant feedback to each other, clarify misunderstandings and construct their knowledge base" (Huang & Nakazawa, 2010, p.235).

An additional inherent benefit of wikis is learners' motivation. As Weeler et al. (2008) point out, wikis have the ability to keep learners connected, so they may feel closer to each other and more engaged in the learning task. Wikis are also considered "highly democratic" (Lee, 2010, p.260), because they disperse individual power; all participants have an equal status and the right to contribute or edit entries. Finally, they are excellent resources for the learners' own construction of knowledge (Boulos et al., 2006).

Given the numerous advantages of wikis presented above, many researchers have aimed to study these tools in depth. Most of them have focused on students' perceptions regarding the use of wikis, their revising conducts in the writing process, or the final writing product (Li, 2012). Others focus on descriptions of the learning process through wikis, or provide suggestions of guidelines for their implementation in the classrooms (Forte and Bruckman, 2007). Nevertheless, articles venturing to analyze the students' interaction in the 'discussion' option of wikis are rare. Among them, we can draw attention to Lund's (2008) study, which claims that there is a tension between the individual and the collective in terms of ownership, and that students need to get accustomed to this collective ownership in order to succeed in creating a text in collaboration.

2.2. A model of linguistic politeness

During more than three decades, Brown and Levinson's politeness model (1987) has been a highly influential theory that aims at explaining the nature of human interaction. Their theory departs from that of Goffman's (1967), who maintained that humans own a public self-image or 'face' that can be preserved, threatened or lost in human interaction. Brown and Levinson

highlight the relevance of this construct by asserting that every human being has the need to preserve their public image, and that the best way to do so is by respecting other people's face. Face is vulnerable, since there are acts in human interaction that represent an inherent harm to public image.

A further development of Brown and Levinson's theory when compared to Goffman is the fact that they consider that face has two different sides: positive and negative. The first one expresses the universal desire to be appreciated and socially accepted or recognized; the second, on the other hand, refers to people's desire to act freely in their own territory. Positive and negative politeness occurs when trying to protect those two sides of face. In this light, individuals tend to use positive politeness strategies, whose objective is to soften face threatening acts (FTAs from now on), when there is a danger to others' positive face, whereas they use negative politeness strategies when the aim is to avoid damaging others' negative face.

Politeness, therefore, clashes with Grice's maxims, which are ''guidelines for achieving maximally efficient communication'' (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.4). The Gricean model focuses on the cooperation principle, by means of which interlocutors aim to reach a maximum communicative efficiency concerning quality, quantity, manner and relevance of the message (Grice, 1975). Brown and Levinson affirm that this efficiency can threaten the relationship between interlocutors, and that, as a consequence, politeness would take place in order to save or maintain those relationships.

Another claim that Brown and Levinson make is that politeness is used by rational individuals who are endowed with practical reasoning. Hence, the way politeness works in the human mind could be summarized as follows: if I want to preserve or improve my face or public image, I need to behave linguistically in two ways: not interfering in others' freedom

and not showing disdain to others. Therefore, the concepts of positive and negative face are closely related and intertwined.

These authors provide a list of intrinsic FTAs, which need to be mitigated to avoid damaging the face and the relationships with others. They include orders and requests, suggestions and advice, reminders, warnings, offers, promises, compliments or criticism, among others (1987, pp.66-67). These speech acts threaten the positive and the negative face of one or both interlocutors. An example of FTA applied to real life is skillfully presented by Jansen and Janssen (2010), who reinforce the idea of the strong connection between positive and negative face:

> Model Person A requests Model Person B to lend him fifty dollars. A's own positive face is threatened because he finds himself belonging to the unpleasant category of people who bother other people. Furthermore, A has to admit to himself that he is somewhat dependent on B, which threatens his negative face. As for B, his negative face is threatened because he knows that A expects him to comply; therefore, he has to do something that A asks, which limits his personal wants. If B refuses, he damages both his own positive face and that of requester A because he denies the legitimacy, or at least the normality of the request (p.2533).

Additionally, Brown and Levinson offer a classification of available strategies that speakers can select when they need to perform a face threatening act. They sort the strategies into five different groups:

- On record, without redressive action, baldly. The speaker employs a straightforward language, without any intention to minimize the face threat and conforming to Grice's efficiency rules.
- On record, with redressive action, with positive politeness. The speaker makes use of politeness strategies that soften the impact of the FTA on the positive face.
- On record, with redressive action, with negative politeness. The speaker uses politeness strategies which reduce the threat on the negative face of the addressee.

- Off record. The speaker's message implies ambiguity and is realized by metaphors, rhetorical questions, irony or hints.
- Do not do the FTA. The speaker avoids performing the FTA. (p.68-70)

In order to determine the reasons or factors that lead a speaker to select a specific strategy, Brown and Levinson take into account three different variables: distance between speakers, relative power between speakers and absolute ranking of impositions in the particular culture (1987, p.74). Therefore, it is possible to calculate the weightiness of a FTA by applying the following formula: $W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_X$. The weight of a FTA, consequently, would be the addition of the three previously mentioned variables. However, all these factors are context-dependent, that is, power and distance are relative and vary from culture to culture.

Finally, these authors formulate a thorough taxonomy of politeness realizations, which might be one of the main reasons why their theory is so popular. This classification includes positive and negative politeness realizations, as well as off-record ones, including examples from different languages in order to prove the universality of their model. Positive politeness realizations comprise strategies with three main goals: to claim common ground, to convey cooperation and to fulfill the hearer's wants. On the other hand, negative politeness gathers strategies aimed to express indirectness, minimization of imposition and speaker's detachment. Finally, as mentioned before, off-record realizations imply mainly hints, irony or metaphoric language, while bald on-record strategies aim to conform with Grice's Maxims (1975) and, therefore, to reach maximum efficiency in communication. A complete taxonomy of realizations of politeness strategies in Brown and Levinson's model can be found in Appendix 1.

2.3.Politeness theory applied to computer-mediated communication

Literature regarding the use of politeness in online environments is still somewhat scarce and in most of the cases it encompasses two types: "one applies small subsets of Brown and Levinson's typology [generally those easy to count] to medium-sized corpora, while the other applies all or most of the typology to very small datasets" (Burke and Krout, 2008). Nonetheless, even if not profuse, research studies dealing with politeness in online environments have made several important and insightful contributions to characterize the nature of computer-mediated exchanges.

Of great relevance for this study is Vinagre's (2008) research on student telecollaborative exchanges via e-mail. Her findings showed that interaction between the participants implied an abundant use of politeness strategies, a vast majority of them of the positive type. The reasons she provides to explain those results are that social distance between the participants was low and that the students' objective was to create a friendly environment in order to succeed in collaboration. Another interesting study is the one accomplished by Park (2008), who concentrated on analyzing how participants of a group discussion forum interacted with each other in order to present their ideas and thoughts. Coinciding with Vinagre's (2008) findings, he observed that the frequency of negative politeness was very low compared to positive and bald on-record occurrences. He also attributed this trend to the close relationship between the participants.

In a similar fashion to the present study, Li (2012) examined the function and use of politeness strategies employed in wiki collaborative writing by Chinese students. She concluded that the main purpose of the politeness devices was to construct effective social interaction and cooperation. In contrast to the previous research articles, the students of this project made a rather balanced use of both positive and negative politeness strategies. The prominent role of negative politeness devices in this context might be related to the

characteristics of the participants –their culture or the existing relationship between them, for example.

Schallert et al. (2009), in turn, were interested in studying the relationship between linguistic politeness and discourse functions in different synchronous and asynchronous tools. Regarding functions, they resolved that synchronous computer interaction fostered "information seeking, information providing and social comments" (p.713), while asynchronous media encouraged discussion, sharing and explanation of ideas and self-assessment. They also demonstrated that linguistic politeness was more likely to occur in messages containing praise or conversation management, while it was less habitual when the participants shared their experiences.

Carlo and Yoo (2007) compared the characteristics of politeness in computer-mediated communication and face-to-face interaction, finding that users employed a significantly higher number of negative politeness strategies online than face-to-face. Additionally, Duthler (2006) compared requests in two different modes: voicemails and e-mails, reaching the conclusion that e-mail requests are more polite than voicemail requests. The reason he provides to explain this tendency is that "text-based, asynchronous communication eliminates the necessity to concentrate on performance cues and adds the capability to plan, compose, and edit a communication, […] [enabling] communicators to create more carefully considered messages" (p.519).

Furthermore, Lam (2011) aimed to ascertain the relationship between the usage of politeness and the construction of trust in the workplace. He posited that employees trusted leaders who used mitigating strategies, such as downgraders and supportive moves in their e-mails, as opposed to those who did not. Locke and Daly (2007) observed the role of the politeness strategies used by postgraduate students who collaborated to create an online paper for their master's degree. They asserted that the function of positive politeness strategies was

crucial in the success of the paper, since they contributed to "create a congenial space" (p.121) where the participants felt comfortable and safe to give opinions, share doubts or agree and disagree. Moreover, they found out that students were able to express emotions as proficiently as face-to-face, concluding that the lack of non-verbal cues was not a significant impediment for the success of the students' interaction.

In the next section we describe the methodology followed in the study, including a description of the participants, materials and procedure used, as well as an explanation of the method and tools employed in order to carry out the study.

3. Methodology

3.1.Materials and participants

The wiki-mediated exchanges which are the object of examination in this study have been collected from seven different wikis. These wikis were created by undergraduate students as a requirement to pass a course on Information and Communication Technology taught at UAM during the academic year 2012-2013. The participants organized themselves in small groups and were asked to create a Wikispace and work collaboratively in order to review the literature on computer supported collaborative learning (CSCL) and to analyze the possible applications of different web 2.0 tools in the foreign language classroom. In order to facilitate information exchange and discussion among group members, participants were encouraged to use the discussion section of the wiki. Thus, thirty two undergraduate students were divided into three groups of four people and four groups of five. Twenty-two of them were women, while the remaining ten were men. Regarding their nationality, twenty-seven were Spanish, two were Italian, two were Polish and one was Czech. Most of the students were fourth year students who were doing degrees in Modern Languages and English Studies. In addition, a small number (five) were fourth year students of the B.A. in Asian and African Studies and

five were Erasmus exchange students. Since most of the participants had been classmates for more than three years, we can assume that they are acquaintances with a relatively high degree of intimacy and friendship. Nevertheless, this might not be the case with the international students, who were on exchange programs in Spain for one academic year or less and did not have the same degree of familiarity as the rest of the students. Therefore, we can infer that there was a higher social distance between the Erasmus students and the rest of the group, although the effect of this higher distance may not show in our results since most Erasmus students chose to work together in the wiki.

As we have mentioned already, the wikis were created using Wikispaces (www.wikispaces.com), a well-known platform which allows students and teachers to develop user-friendly educational wikis for free. In order to review the literature on CSCL, the participants' task was to individually read and summarize an article related to language learning through technology, post their summaries and links to the articles on their own wiki pages and then meet online with the rest of the group in order to discuss their reviews in the 'discussion' section of each individual page. Later, participants needed to create a collective conclusion page in which they included a summary of the main insights and ideas they had reviewed, together with possible applications of CSCL in an EFL classroom and self-reflection on their learning experience collaborating in the wiki. Some of the wikis additionally included optional materials, such as videos, links to blogs or pictures. Figure 1 shows a sample of the comments made by some of the participants of a wiki in the 'discussion' section.

Figure 1. Sample of comments in a wiki 'discussion page'

In order to collect the data for the analysis, we gathered all the comments from every discussion section of the seven wikis in a corpus, which eventually consisted of a total of 22.279 words. The average number of words per wiki was 3183, with a high standard deviation of 3190. This is due to the substantial differences between the wikis with more words in their discussion sections (n. 8145, n. 5431) and those with the smallest amounts (n. 67, n. 93). Later, all the comments written by the group members on the discussion pages of the wikis were manually tagged by using the UAM-CorpusTool, a program which allows annotating text from a corpus using a personalized scheme (O'Donnell, 2008). The scheme employed was an adaptation of Brown and Levinson's (1987) taxonomy of politeness realizations. In this adaptation, following Vinagre (2008), each politeness strategy was tagged with either P+ to indicate positive politeness, P– to indicate negative politeness, OFF to indicate off-record and ON to indicate bald on record and examples taken from our corpus (when available) were included to illustrate the different strategies. The modified taxonomy can be seen in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 below:

Table 1. Bald on-record politeness strategies with examples from the corpus

ON-Emergency: Writer considers that there is no time to redress the FTA.	*"Don't reveal who I am!" (Playing at a guessing game)*
ON-Maximum efficiency: Writer considers that other things are more important than face	*"Make your conclusions in the conclusions page and tomorrow we finish together that part"*
ON-Formulaic entreaties: Constructions that have become conventionalized and contain imperatives	*"Don't worry, you can edit everything"*
ON-Power show-off:	*"Bring me more wine"*

Table 2. Positive politeness strategies with examples from the corpus

P+1: Notice and attend to reader's interests, wants, needs or goods	*"I've been peaking at your article and your comments and they are interesting"*
P+2: Exaggerate interest, approval or sympathy towards reader	*"I like pretty much your point about poor people who cannot afford these tools"*
P+3: Intensify interest in writer's own contribution to show common wants	*"You maybe freak out, but I think that it is useful to see the other person pronouncing the words"*
P+4: Use in-group identity markers to convey in-group membership	*"Hey guys! :)"* *"Smell you around!"*
P+5: Seek agreement in safe topics	*"As Maria said, many people on Twitter make grammatical errors"*
P+6: Avoid, soften or conceal disagreement	*"So… yes, they are flexible if you really know about computer sciences"*
P+7: Presuppose, raise or assert common ground	*"I had Busuu for a time but I got bored"* *"It is similar to Facebook's Farmville"*
P+8: Joke in order to indicate shared connections	*"We should totally be called The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen GRRR XD"*
P+9: Assert or presuppose writer's knowledge of or concern for reader's wants	*"I know you are stressed to finish your summary in time, but don't worry if it's delayed a bit"*
P+10: Make an offer or promise with the aim to help reader obtain his wants	*"I'm reading your part and I'm going to comment while I read"*
P+11: Be optimistic	*"I hope this article is useful for you!"*
P+12: Include both writer and reader in the activity by using 'we' to refer only to one participant	*"How can we upload the webquest?"* *"It would be better to add it in the final conclusion. Let's do it!"*
P+13: Give or ask for reasons for an imposition on the reader	*"I think that paragraph is quite repetitive. We say "collaboration tools x3!"*
P+14: Assume or assert reciprocity	*"I saw your stuff on recent changes and I decided to post also some conclusions"*
P+15: Give gifts to reader (gratitude, praise, understanding, cooperation)	*"You definitely did a great job!"* *"Juanjo, you are right"* *"Thanks a lot for the info, Sandra"*

Table 3. Negative politeness strategies with examples from the corpus

P-1: Be conventionally indirect	*"I would suggest you to make a short conclusion at the end of your article"*
P-2: Hedge, avoid assuming that reader will comply or agree	*"I was thinking that maybe we could include some ideas about using iPads"*
P-3: Be pessimistic	*"I have added some images. You can delete them if you don't like them"*
P-4: Minimize the imposition	*"I would just like to add one thing"* *"You can put them together, it's up to you!"*
P-5: Show deference, raise reader's status or abase writer	*"You're more familiarized with those topics, so we hope it will be completed soon!"*
P-6: Apologize	*"Sorry it took me so long to reply"* *"My bad, I just realized it"*
P-7: Impersonalize, avoid pronouns 'I' and 'you	*"It is a good idea to encourage students to learn that way"*
P-8: State the FTA as a general rule	*"It is important that everyone contributes to the commentaries page"*
P-9: Nominalize, avoid verbs to make requests or state imposition	*"The learning of a language needs to have a process of immersion"*
P-10: Go on record as incurring a debt or as not indebting reader	*"If you can have a look, that would be great"*

Table 4. Off-record politeness strategies with examples from the corpus

OFF 1: Give hints	*"I have already uploaded that part but it still needs some changes" (Help me improve it)*
OFF 2: Give association clues	*"We have finished the first part. There are still left podcast and social networks" (Write about them)*
OFF 3: Presuppose	*"I washed the car again" (May imply criticism)*
OFF 4: Understate	*"John's hardly a genius" (He's not a genius at all)*
OFF 5: Overstate	*"I spent hours in the traffic jam" (That's why I'm late)*
OFF 6: Use tautologies	*"Boys will be boys" (Excusing their behavior)*
OFF 7: Use contradictions	*"Are you upset? Yes and no" (Criticism)*
OFF 8: Be ironic	*"Lovely day!" (During a thunderstorm)*
OFF 9: Use metaphors	*"Tom is a real fish" (Criticism, he drinks a lot)*
OFF 10: Use rhetorical questions	*"How many times I have to tell you…?" (Criticism)*
OFF 11: Be ambiguous	*"Peter is pretty smooth" (Compliment or insult)*
OFF 12: Be vague	*"I'm going you-know-where" (Euphemism)*
OFF 13: Over-generalize	*"Old boys help at home" (Criticism)*
OFF 14: Displace reader	*"John, can you pass me the salt?" (Hoping that David, who is closer, will do it)*
OFF 15: Be incomplete, use ellipsis	*"Well, if you don't tidy up your room…"*

We selected the UAMCorpusTool for our analysis because it permits to tag overlapping politeness strategies, which occurs when we find two or more politeness strategies in the same sentence. For instance, the utterance 'Let's do it like this just to avoid being repetitive' includes several strategies, like giving reasons, minimizing imposition and including both S and H in the activity. This software also included 'search' and 'statistics' functions, which were extremely convenient, influencing its selection as a research tool for this study. Figure 2 below shows a screenshot of the 'search' window. In this case, we have selected a specific strategy (P-4 'minimize imposition'). Consequently, the program displays the different instances tagged as such, allowing further edition and revision.

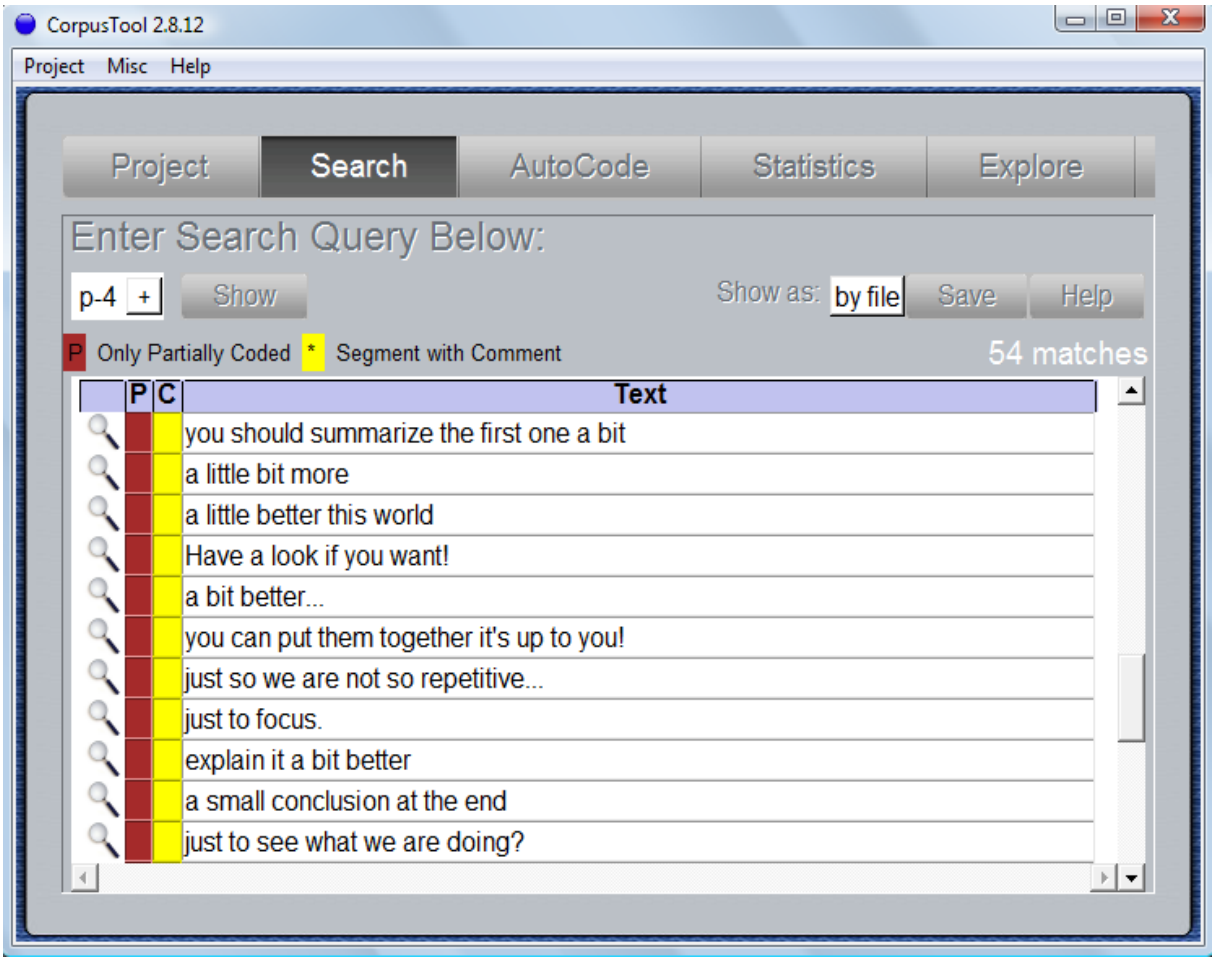

Figure 2. Screenshot of the 'search' window in UAM CorpusTool

On the other hand, Figure 3 below shows UAM CorpusTool 'statistics' window, which permits researchers to describe and compare datasets taking into account the features that have been introduced previously (in our case, the linguistic politeness scheme) or just considering some general text characteristics, such as text complexity, subjectivity or lexical density. For this study, however, it has only been necessary to use the statistics related to the first option, feature coding. This window also gives the possibility to alternate between local and global counting and, when comparing datasets, it includes a useful and visual representation of the data by graphs.

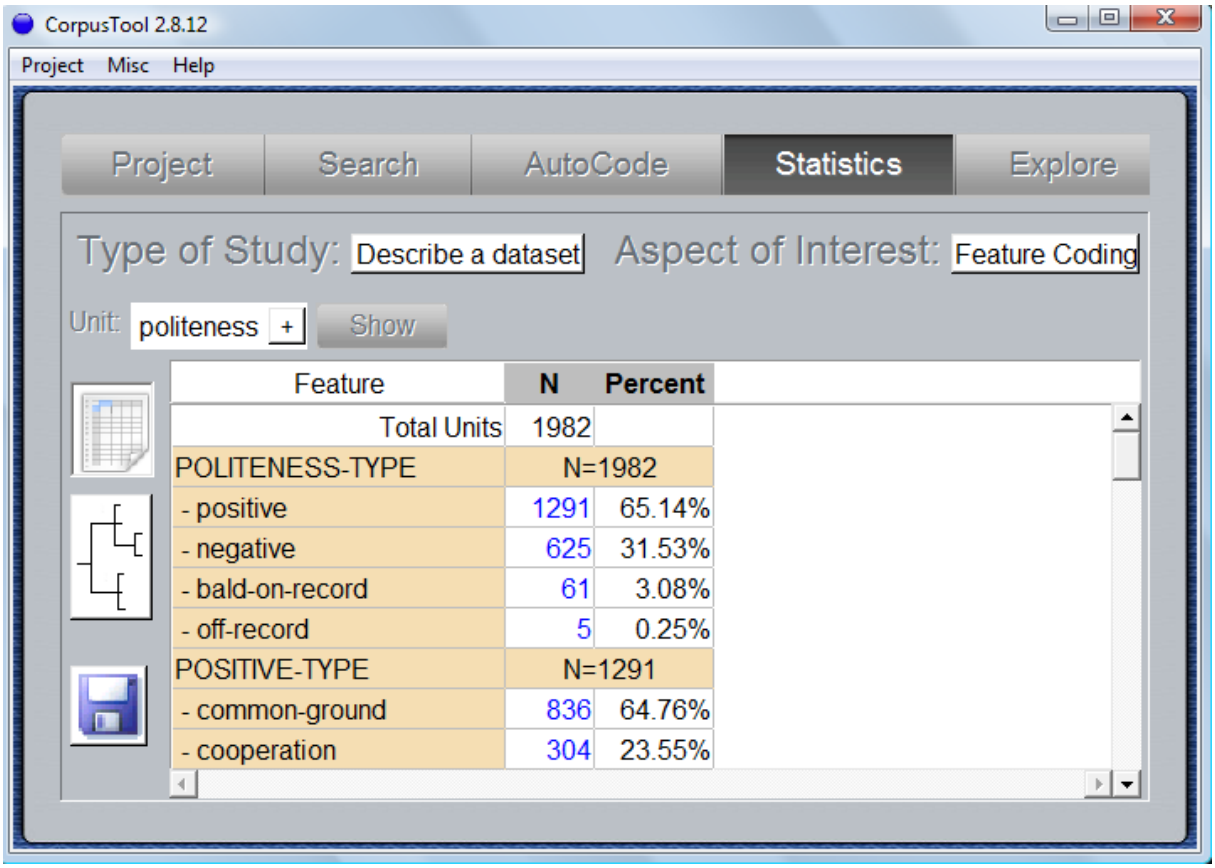

Figure 3. Screenshot of the 'statistics' window in UAM CorpusTool

3.2.Procedure

The annotation process was performed in the following way: first, we created the basic tagging scheme, containing the four main categories presented in Brown & Levinson's (1987) linguistic politeness model (positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on-record and off-record strategies) as well as the specific realizations. Thereafter we manually categorized every politeness strategy identified in the corpus by underlining a fragment of the discussion text and assigning features to it. For example, in order to tag the segment 'thank you', we first highlighted the segment and then selected the feature 'positive', from the four possible options (positive, negative, bald on record...), which correspond to the major classifications of Brown & Levinson's model. Then, three options appeared, corresponding to the subcategories inside 'positive'. We double clicked on the third, 'fulfil H's want', and finally we labelled the specific realization of the strategy being analysed by choosing the only alternative provided in this case, which was 'give gifts to H'. In order to make this process easier, each strategy contained a 'gloss' or brief description, which served to remind the annotator about the characteristics of every individual realization and to consult it in case of doubt.

Figure 4 offers a visual representation of the interface used for annotation in the UAM-CorpusTool, including the 'assigned' features, from general to specific in an up-to-down scale and the 'gloss' or definition of this strategy. It also shows a sample of two overlapping strategies in the utterance 'I think your article is very attractive', which contains hedging the writer's personal opinion and exaggerating interest to the reader's goods. Finally, we can see in the screenshot that this software allows annotators and researchers to leave comments at the bottom for each tagging made. This option becomes extremely convenient when working with other people or when there are doubts about annotating a segment in a particular way, so that it can be reviewed at a later stage.

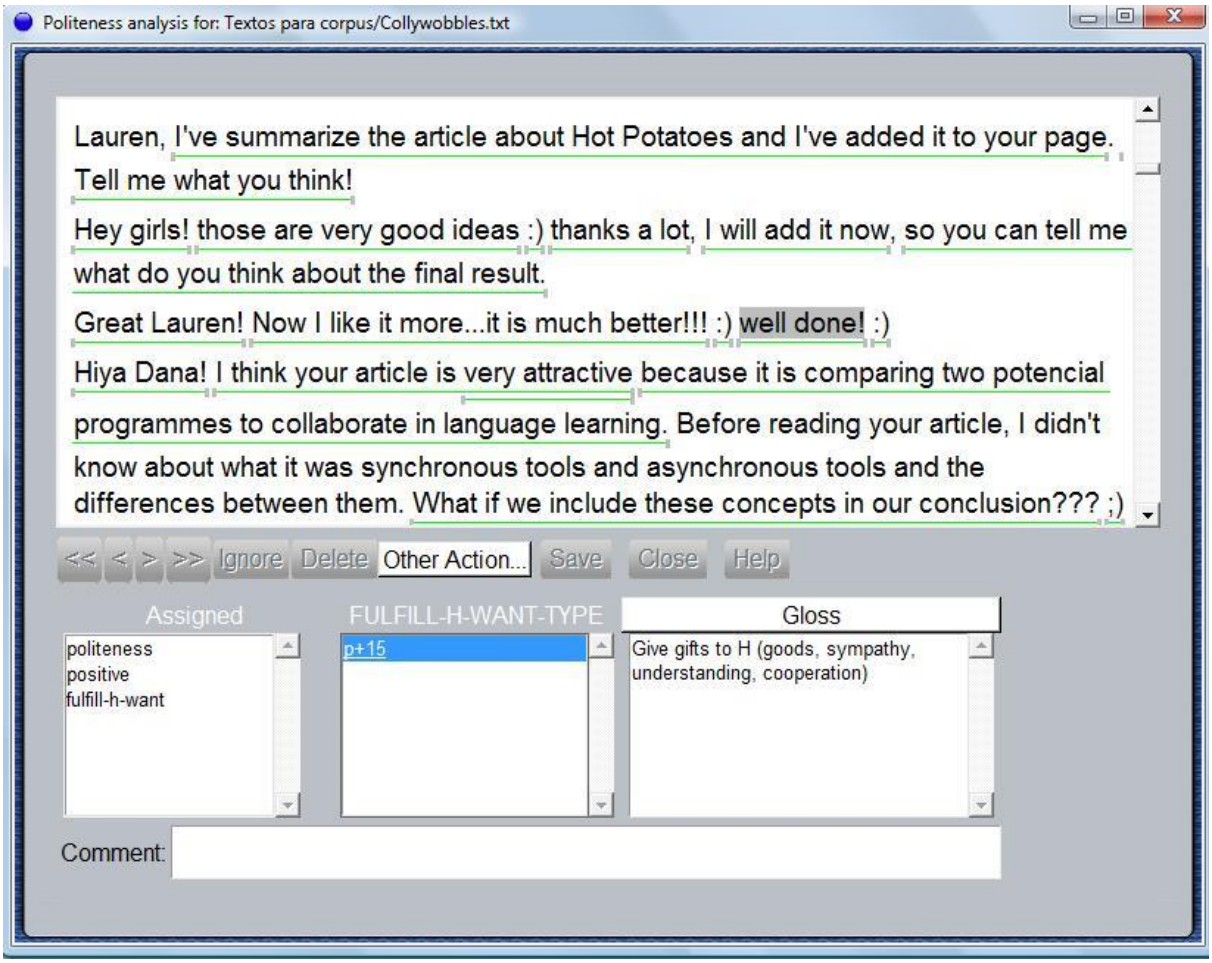

Figure 4. Screenshot of the annotation process in the UAM-CorpusTool

3.3. Analysis

Once we annotated the entire corpus, the total amount of politeness strategies found was 1.982. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted in order to answer the three research questions, which, for clarity reasons, we re-state here:

- RQ1: Do students who collaborate online through wikis employ politeness strategies to mitigate possible face threats? If so, what type predominates?
- RQ2: Are there significant differences in the use of politeness strategies among the different groups? Do they have a clear impact on the members' interaction and collaboration processes?

- RQ3: Does the use of politeness strategies in wiki-mediated exchanges differ when compared to exchanges via other asynchronous on-line communication tools, such as e-mail?

First, in order to answer RQ1, we used raw numbers and percentages with the aim to determine the frequency of each type of politeness strategy and, therefore, to ascertain the most recurrent realizations in our corpus. Right after the statistical analysis we also included a qualitative analysis of some representative fragments from the interactions that occurred between the participants, attending to the different discourse functions they develop and their impact on politeness. These excerpts are highly valuable in order to shed further light on the use, function and distribution of the politeness strategies employed in the wikis.

So as to answer RQ2 we examined the frequencies of use of the different politeness strategies in each wiki. Hence, we used a two sample t-test to analyze whether there were significant differences between the frequencies of use of positive, negative, on- and off-record strategies in the seven wikis under analysis in this study. Since the t-test allows only comparing two variables, we decided to contrast the wikis in pairs, obtaining in the end twenty-one different tables of contrasted results.

Then, in order to answer the second part of our second research question, we needed to find out whether the differences in the number of politeness strategies in the wikis had an impact on the participants' collaboration. To do that, and following the previously mentioned hypothesis that a high number of editions was a sign of group collaboration, we performed a Pearson correlation test using two variables: number of politeness strategies used in each wiki and number of editions made by the participants in the conclusion page. By doing so we aimed to determine a possible correspondence between politeness and collaboration. The number of revisions of each conclusion page was calculated manually, omitting consecutive editions made by the same participant in a short period of time and regarding them as one

single revision. We deemed these continuous modifications as writers' revisions of their own work or as attempts to save their progress, not as signs of collaborative editions of other members' work. The results of the Pearson correlation test were also complemented by qualitative observations of the conclusion pages, judging whether the text showed evident signs of being written either collaboratively or individually. Some aspects which signalled collaborative work were cohesion in the text or the use of the first person plural pronoun 'we'. On the other hand, the existence of individual members' names or first person singular pronoun 'I' and the presence of fragmentation in the texts were evidences of individual, uncoordinated work.

Finally, in order to answer RQ3, which dealt with the similarities and differences between politeness strategies used in wikis and e-mails, we compared the findings from this study with those of Vinagre's (2008), who researched the use of politeness strategies in e-mail exchanges. As it was also necessary to compare raw numbers and percentages at this stage, we used again two sample t-tests between percentages to ascertain whether the frequencies of use of the different politeness strategies showed a significant difference in both corpora. After presenting the results of the data analysis, we discussed and offered some reasons that could explain the differences observed in the findings.

4. Results and discussion

RQ1. Do students who collaborate online through wikis employ politeness strategies to mitigate possible face threats? If so, what type predominates?

The final number of politeness strategies found in the corpus indicates an affirmative answer to our first research question. We were able to identify and annotate 1.982 samples of linguistic politeness which contained 14.776 words out of a total of 22.279 from the whole corpus. Consequently, it is fairly evident that online collaboration in wikis entails a variety of

face-threats that need to be minimized and that participants seem to be aware of, since they use politeness strategies abundantly.

Regarding the typological distribution of the strategies, positive politeness was the most frequent, comprising 61,5% (n. 1.291) of all politeness devices used in the wiki-exchanges. On the other hand, negative politeness represented also an important figure in the corpus, constituting 31,5% (n. 625) of all strategies found. Besides, we found some instances of bald on-record strategies, embracing 3,1% (n. 61) of all strategies, while samples of off-record strategies were rather infrequent (only 0,3%, n.5). Table 5 and Figure 5 summarize the results concerning the different types of politeness strategies used by participants in our study, classified according to the four main categories: positive, negative, bald on-record and off-record strategies.

Table 5. Total results of politeness strategies used by participants

	Positive	Negative	On-record	Off-record	Total
Number	1291	625	61	5	1982
Percentage	65,1%	31,5%	3,1%	0,3%	100,0%

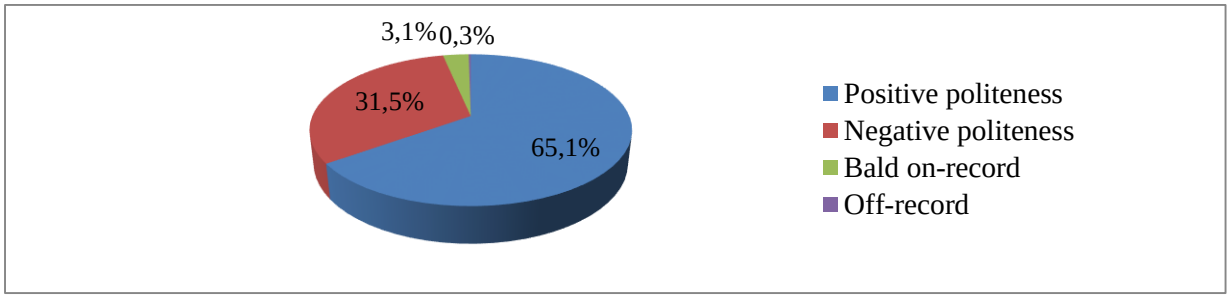

Figure 5. Distribution of politeness strategies by category

As mentioned in the literature background, the category 'positive politeness strategies' is composed of three sub-categories, which are 'claiming common ground', 'conveying cooperation' and 'fulfilling hearers' wants'. In our analysis, we discovered that out of a total of 1.291 positive politeness strategies found, those strategies used to claim common ground were by far the most abundant, representing 64,8% (n. 836) of the total, followed by those aimed at conveying cooperation (23,5%, n.304). Finally, strategies related to fulfill the wants

or needs of the addressee amounted to 151, 7,62% of the total of positive politeness strategies found. Table 6 and Figure 6 outline these findings, showing the allotment levels that each different sub-type of positive politeness strategies represented.

Table 6. Total results of positive politeness strategies used by participants

	Common ground	Cooperation	Fulfill readers' wants	Total
Number	836	304	151	1291
Percentage	64,8%	23,5%	11,7%	100,0%

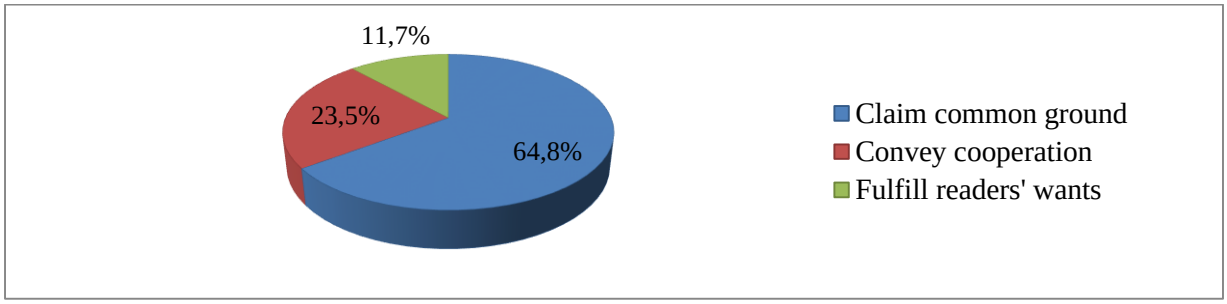

Figure 6. Distribution of positive politeness strategies by sub-category

In order to analyze concrete realizations of politeness strategies we assigned them a code so as to simplify their analysis and facilitate understanding. In order to do so, we followed Vinagre's (2008) politeness strategies coding system, already mentioned in section 3, whereby we attached a P+ to indicate positive politeness strategies, P- for negative ones, ON for on-record and OFF for off-record strategies to each specific strategy after it had been numbered.

We observed that the most frequent politeness strategies in the corpus were P+4 'using of in-group identity markers' (n.516/26,03%), P-2 'hedging' (n.339/17,1%), P+15 'giving gifts to the reader' (n.151/7,62%), P+13, giving/asking for reasons (n.123/6,21%) and P-1 'being conventionally indirect' (n. 96/4,84%). These five realizations comprised more than half of the total amount of politeness strategies found in the corpus. Table 7 compiles the total results and percentages of instances of each individual strategy found in the corpus. Those strategies that do not appear in the table did not have any instances in the analysis.

Table 7. Total results of instances of individual politeness strategies

Strategy	Total n.	Percentage
P+1: Notice/attend to reader's interests, wants, needs or goods	77	3,88%
P+2: Exaggerate interest/approval/sympathy towards reader	92	4,64%
P+3: Intensify interest in writer's own contribution	4	0,20%
P+4: Use in-group identity markers to convey group membership	516	26,03%
P+5: Seek agreement in safe topics	38	1,92%
P+6: Avoid/soften/conceal disagreement	37	1,87%
P+7: Presuppose/raise/assert common ground	42	2,12%
P+8: Joke in order to indicate shared connections	30	1,51%
P+9: Assert/presuppose writer's concern for reader's wants	9	0,45%
P+10: Offer or promise to help reader obtain his wants	88	4,44%
P+11: Be optimistic	18	0,91%
P+12: Include both writer and reader in the activity	58	2,93%
P+13: Give/ask for reasons for an imposition on the reader	123	6,21%
P+14: Assume/assert reciprocity	8	0,40%
P+15: Give gifts to reader (gratitude/praise/understanding)	151	7,62%
P-1: Be conventionally indirect	96	4,84%
P-2: Hedge, avoid assuming that reader will comply or agree	339	17,10%
P-3: Be pessimistic	20	1,01%
P-4: Minimize the imposition	54	2,72%
P-5: Show deference, raise reader's status or abase writer	2	0,10%
P-6: Apologize	16	0,81%
P-7: Impersonalize, avoid pronouns 'I' and 'you	72	3,63%
P-8: State the FTA as a general rule	5	0,25%
P-9: Nominalize, avoid verbs to make requests or state imposition	18	0,91%
P-10: Go on record as incurring a debt or as not indebting reader	3	0,15%
ON 1: Emergency	4	0,20%
ON 2: Maximum efficiency	49	2,47%
ON 3: Formulaic entreaties	8	0,40%
OFF 1: Give hints	1	0,05%
OFF 2: Give association clues	2	0,10%
OFF 10: Use rhetorical questions	1	0,05%
OFF 15: Be incomplete, use ellipsis	1	0,05%
TOTAL	**1982**	**100%**

Our next analysis on the politeness strategies found in our corpus had a more qualitative nature. While annotating the exchanges, we perceived an apparent relation between discourse functions and politeness strategies. The wiki exchanges that constitute the corpus of this study contained frequently repeated functions, such as providing and reacting to feedback, requesting, sharing personal experiences, explaining opinions and reacting to those opinions,

either by agreeing or disagreeing. The following excerpts show a more detailed depiction of this perceived relation between politeness and the language functions required in collaborative wiki exchanges. The participants' names that appear in them have been modified.

First, provision of feedback was a very frequent function we encountered in the corpus. Working in collaboration requires participants to review each others' work, giving praise in case it is good and suggesting ways to improve it if it needs amends of any type. Below are some of the many examples of administration of feedback that we found in our corpus, both for corrective feedback and approval:

Sample 1:

OK, one feedback thing (P-4), I hope you don't get mad (P-3), but whenever you use capitals like now: JUST, readers can think you're mad or that you're shouting (P-8) (what happened to me right now), even if you want to emphasize it, try to avoid capital letters (ON Efficiency) :S (P+4)

Sample 2:

Hey Carmen! (P+4) I've just read again your article (P+1), and I realized that you could structure it (P-1) a bit better (P-4)... It seems (P-7) kind of messy (P-2) when you start talking about wikis because you keep talking about blogs as a way to compare them with wikis... (P+13) maybe (P-2) it is better (P-7) if you explain first both wikis and blogs separately with its corresponding advantages and disadvantages, and then introduce at the end of your article some differences and similarities between them to make it more clearly...

Sample 3:

Carmen! (P+4) Now you have explained what asynchronous and synchronous tools are, I think (P-2) it is much clearer! (P+2) ;) (P+4) you are right about the differences between blogs and wikis, it would be better (P-7) to add it in the final conclusion (P+5). Let's do it! (P+12)

Sample 4:

Great Sara! (P+15) Now I like it more...it is much better!!! (P+2) :) (P+4) well done! (p+15) :) (p+4)

As we can see in the first two samples, the presence of corrective feedback seems to be associated to the use of negative politeness strategies, since the act of correcting other people's work is perceived as highly face threatening. Therefore, the writer attempts to detach himself from this message, choosing his words consciously carefully. In the first exchange the writer starts by minimizing imposition on the reader ("one feedback thing") and being pessimistic, assuming that the reader may feel angry at his comment. Then, he moves to state the FTA as a general rule (you should not use capital letters or we might thing you are shouting). He ends with a bald on-record strategy, using an imperative as an advice for maximum efficiency and a troubled smiley, which is the only case of positive politeness in the fragment. The second fragment begins with two positive politeness strategies, the use of in-group identity markers by welcoming the reader informally and noticing and attending to the reader's wants by stating that the writer has read the reader's text. However, once the writer starts suggesting improvements, the use of negative politeness strategies becomes the norm. First, she minimizes the imposition by stating that the text can be structured "a bit" better while, at the same time, being conventionally indirect by using 'could' instead of 'can'. She avoids using the first singular personal pronoun when giving her opinion twice in the text ("it

seems", "it is better") and uses hedges to avoid being emphatic or categorical ("maybe", "kind of"). Another tool employed by the speaker to minimize the face threat is to give reasons for her criticism, which is considered a positive politeness strategy.

As for offering praise and positive feedback to the partners, we can also perceive a fairly clear trend towards the use of positive politeness among participants, with some isolated samples of negative politeness strategies used by the participants when giving their opinions, a discourse function that, as we will see below, tends towards addressing the negative face of the participants. In sample 3, the writer starts her message by using in-group identity markers such as addressing the reader by her first name and using emoticons. She also exaggerates her opinion about the improvement of the reader's text, hedging her statement by using a personal opinion marker ("I think"), one of the two negative politeness strategies of the sample, used to avoid assertiveness. The other negative politeness strategy that appears in this fragment is used to distance the writer from her message by impersonalizing the utterance ("it would be better"). The writer ends her comment by using two positive politeness strategies: agreeing with the reader and including both writer and reader in the activity, even though it is just the reader who will perform the edition on the text. Sample 4 collects the three most common positive politeness strategies that emerge when approving of the readers' work: 'using in-group identity markers', 'exaggerating' and 'giving gifts to the reader'.

The study of samples containing the participants' reactions and answers to the feedback provided by their partners showed that these comments included both the use of positive and negative politeness strategies, showing, however, a tendency towards the former. Samples 5 and 6 illustrate this phenomenon.

Sample 5:

Hey girls! (P+4) those are very good ideas (P+2) :) (P+4) thanks a lot (P+15), I will add it now (P+10), so you can tell me what do you think about the final result (P+1).

Sample 6:

Hey girls! (P+4) Sorry for the delay... (P-6) I summarize the article just in the way it was written, that's why it has that structure! (P+13) But I think (P-2) you might be right... (P-1) I'm going to define asynchronous tools and synchronous tools, just in case it is not very clear (P+10). Regarding the differences between blogs and wikis... don't you think it is better to do it in the final conclusion? (P-1) Although if you it is better to put it here I'll do it! (P+6) It's just so we are not so repetitive... (P-4) Thanks for your help! (P+15)

Sample 5 contains exclusively positive politeness strategies. The writer starts, as usual, with an in-group identity welcome and by exaggerating her evaluation of the suggestions she has been given by the other members. Then, she thanks them and promises the readers to include the recommended changes. She ends the exchange by stating that she is interested in their opinion after the changes are made. On the other hand, sample 6 includes both positive and negative politeness strategies. The writer apologizes for taking some time to answer and explains why she used a determined structure which was criticized in the feedback comments offered by the other wiki members. Then, she acknowledges the appropriateness of their suggestion, but she does so by using personal opinion hedges ("I think") and indirectness ("you might be right" instead of "you are right"). She promises to include some improvements and, in the end, she offers an alternative to the suggestions she was offered, using the negative strategy of being conventionally indirect. Nonetheless, she avoids disagreement by respecting the others' opinion and minimizes the imposition of her suggestion.

Samples 7 and 8 below present instances of requests found in our corpus. As we will see, this discourse function provides some interesting instances of both on-record and off-

record strategies, as well as a relative balance between positive and negative politeness strategies.

Sample 7:

Hey guys! (P+4) Juan and me have just connected part of the articles with collaborative learning and intercultural communicative competence (P+14). There are still left the podcast and social networks! (OFF 2) You are more familiarised with these topics (P-5), so we hope (P+12) it will be completed tomorrow morning! (P+11) :) (P+4)

Sample 8:

If you find some errors or you think that some ideas can be enpressed better (P-3), please (P-2) feel free to make any changes (ON Efficiency). Tomorrow morning we will have to include the part where we explain what is the intercultural communicative competence. I have already prepared that part but it still needs some changes (OFF 1). So, please (P-2) upload the last things that you have to do, make your conclusions in the Conclusions' page and tomorrow we finish together that page (ON Efficiency).

The writer in sample 7 starts his comment by welcoming the readers and asserting reciprocity by asserting that he and another member have completed one part of the task. After that, he avoids asking the other members openly to complete the rest of the work, and he does so by using information clues, which are an off-record strategy ("There are still left the podcast and social networks!"). However, immediately after this, he decides to change his strategy and gives deference to the readers by declaring that they are better qualified to complete the task. He also employs positive politeness strategies by using "we hope" instead of "I hope", together with being optimistic. Sample 8, in turn, is a request for feedback. The writer assumes a pessimist approach (which is considered a negative politeness strategy) by

implying that his text may need amendments or revisions. Then, he adds a bald on-record strategy ("feel free to make any changes"), in which the writer seeks to attain maximum efficiency. Besides, he softens this on-record utterance by preceding it with "please", an edging device. Then, he employs hints ("I have already prepared that part but it still needs some changes") to request in a very indirect way a revision of his work by other members of the group. We find another instance of an on-record strategy motivated by a need of efficiency, again preceded by the hedge "please".

While the participants were discussing the different topics in the wiki, they sometimes had the need to express their own experiences in order to illustrate their ideas and to make their points clear. In this discursive function we discovered a propensity towards the use of positive politeness strategies, being the most common P+7 "Presuppose, raise or assert common ground". Samples 9 and 10 below show comments where the participants share their personal experiences:

Sample 9:

I also use Skype everyday (P+7). It is one of the best ways to communicate with your family and friends. We both share the same 'problem' which is living far away from our homes so it is essential its use (at least for us!) (P+7)

Sample 10:

I would just like to add one thing (P-3) about the videos (P-1). You would be actually surprised (P+3), Alberto (P+4), because for example when texting with his friend, my flatmate uses recordings instead of writing and sending messages on WhatsApp (P+13). He says it's because he's too lazy to write them and when he's doing something, like cooking or doing homework, it's easier just to record it (P+13). :O (P+4)

Sample 9 is a clear example of how the positive politeness strategy 'asserting common ground' works. The writer points out the similarities between the reader and himself, in this case the need they both have to use Skype to communicate with their families. The writer in sample 10 refrains from expressing directly his experience, introducing it by being conventionally indirect ("I would like to add") and minimizing the imposition on the readers ("just", "one thing"). Then, he employs a positive politeness strategy which is rare in our corpus, consisting of intensifying interest in the writer's own contribution to show common interests with the reader ("you would be actually surprised"). In the rest of the sample other positive politeness strategies are present, such as using in-group identity markers and offering reasons that facilitate the readers' understanding of the situation.

Another frequent discourse function that the participants of this study performed in the wiki exchanges is providing opinions. Consequently, they exchanged their own ideas when analyzing and using the different technological tools to be applied to language learning. Sample 11 below is a comment that fulfills this function. We can perceive a clear inclination towards using negative politeness strategies, probably explained by the necessity of the group members to avoid imposing their ideas.

Sample 11:

I think (P-2) the use of Ipads is a quite controversial one, because as they are being introduced now into the teaching and learning system, its purposes are not very clear (P+13). I may argue that (P-2) there is not a real plan by giving an Ipad to a child, and that it may (P-1) sometimes be used as a toy, causing confusion, and running to one App to the other without a really clear meaning...

Sample 11 encloses a participant's opinion about iPads as a learning tool. He makes clear that his statements are not universal truths, but rather personal beliefs by using hedges such as "I

think" or "I may argue that". Also, he attempts to justify his points of view by giving reasons, the only positive politeness strategy present in the comment. Finally, he continues to reinforce this subjectivity by being indirect and not emphatic ("it may be used" instead of "it is used").

The last discourse function that we wanted to explore in this part of the study is that of the participants expressing agreement and disagreement with other members' comments and ideas. In order to do so, we have selected two samples. Sample 12 includes an attempt of a participant to agree with another member, while sample 13 presents an instance of disagreement. We can distinguish in both cases a tendency towards positive politeness strategies.

Sample 12:

I completely agree (P+15), I'm not saying that wikis aren't a good idea or that using only blogs is enough (P+6). You are right; what is a good idea is using them together (P+5).

Sample 13:

Juan (P+4), I see your point and I totally agree with you (P+15). Never mind I would also say (P-1) that as long as children nowadays grow up with all this technology surrounding them, they are not going to appreciate the feeling we can have for books (P+6).

The writer in sample 12 starts her comment by giving gifts to the reader, more specifically understanding. Then, she endeavors to clarify a possible misunderstanding of her ideas, avoiding disagreement with the reader. Finally, she seeks agreement by repeating the opinion that the other member has expressed previously. A brief look at sample 13 could lead to the wrong assumption that it also shows clear agreement between two members. However, even though the writer makes explicit his conformity with the reader's ideas, then he moves to

express a contrary viewpoint. Therefore, he softens the FTA that disagreeing entails by being conventionally indirect ("I would also say") and by avoiding clear disagreement when he agrees partially with the reader's ideas in the beginning of the exchange.

From the analysis of the previous samples we can ascertain that the different types of politeness strategies analyzed in this study were somehow related to the discursive functions used by the participants and their inherent FTAs. In our corpus, we encountered more positive politeness strategies in functions such as giving positive feedback, answering to feedback, sharing personal experiences and disagreeing. On the other hand, negative politeness strategies predominated in functions like giving corrective feedback and providing personal opinions. The function of requesting, in turn, showed a balance between positive and negative politeness strategies, as well as some significant samples of on- and off-record strategies.

If we compare our results to those obtained by Schallert et al. (2009), we can find some similarities and differences. On the one hand, both studies show that positive politeness strategies are common when participants provide positive evaluations. In a similar way, they coincide in the fact that we can expect more negative politeness strategies when corrective feedback is involved. However, the results in both studies differ, for instance, in the discourse function of experience sharing; Schallert et al. found a balance between positive and negative strategies, while we observed a trend towards positive strategies.

The quantitative and qualitative analyses presented here seem to suggest that the participants in this study preferred to claim common ground and cooperation when working collaboratively in group, while, at the same time, avoided being demanding on the readers and reduced the weight of their claims by using negative politeness strategies that hedged their opinions.

RQ2. Are there significant differences in the use of politeness strategies among the different groups? Do they have a clear impact on the members' interaction and collaboration processes?

As we already mentioned in the methodology section, in order to determine whether there were significant differences in the use of politeness strategies among the different wikis, we compared them in pairs. Table 8 below summarizes the number of politeness strategies found in the discussion sections of the different wikis.

Table 8. Number of politeness strategies tagged in each wiki

	Wiki #1	**Wiki #2**	**Wiki #3**	**Wiki #4**	**Wiki #5**	**Wiki #6**	**Wiki #7**
Number of strategies	209	5	864	9	669	200	26

As we can see in the previous table, the members of wikis number #2, #4 and #7 did not comment in the discussion section as often as the others, and therefore the number of politeness strategies found in these wikis is significantly lower. However, these three wikis have a fundamental value in this study, since they represent the first observable difference between wikis, which is the amount of interaction generated in the different groups.

Two-sample t-tests between percentages were performed in order to determine whether there were significant differences in the use of politeness strategies among members in the seven wikis. We used an Alpha-value of 0,05, which, in turn, generated a t-value of 1,96 and a p-value of ,05 for our data. Because of space limitations, the following tables show only the results of the comparison of those pairs of wikis containing a sample higher than 30 politeness strategies, since we consider that they entail a bigger statistical weight. However, a complete list of the comparative tables including the wikis with small samples can be found in Appendix 2. The presence of significant differences between the percentages has been marked with two plus signs (++).

Table 9. Comparison between wikis number #1 and #3

Politeness type	Wiki #1 (n. 209)	Wiki #3 (n. 864)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	54,07%	73,15%	5,373	,0000	++
Negative	42,58%	24,77%	5,132	,0000	++
On-record	2,39%	1,74%	0,623	,5334	
Off-record	0,96%	0,35%	1.158	,2470	

Table 10. Comparison between wikis number #1 and #5

Politeness type	Wiki #1 (n. 209)	Wiki #5 (n. 669)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	54,07%	62,48%	2,171	,0302	++
Negative	42,58%	32,44%	2,685	,0074	++
On-record	2,39%	5,08%	1,648	,0997	
Off-record	0,96%	0%	2,537	,0113	++

Table 11. Comparison between wikis number #1 and #6

Politeness type	Wiki #1 (n. 209)	Wiki #6 (n. 200)	T-value	P-value
Positive	54,07%	49,5%	0,925	,3557
Negative	42,58%	47,5%	1,000	,3180
On-record	2,39%	3%	0,381	,7032
Off-record	0,96%	0%	1,389	,1656

Table 12. Comparison between wikis number #3 and #5

Politeness type	Wiki #3 (n. 864)	Wiki #5 (n. 669)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	73,15%	62,48%	4,460	,0000	++
Negative	24,77%	32,44%	3,313	,0010	++
On-record	1,74%	5,08%	3,686	,0002	++
Off-record	0,35%	0%	1,582	,1259	

Table 13. Comparison between wikis number #3 and #6

Politeness type	Wiki #3 (n. 864)	Wiki #6 (n. 200)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	73,15%	49,5%	7,495	,0000	++
Negative	24,77%	47,5%	6,381	,0000	++
On-record	1,74%	3%	1,154	,2490	
Off-record	0,35%	0%	0,838	,4023	

Table 14. Comparison between wikis number #5 and #6

Politeness type	Wiki #5 (n. 669)	Wiki #6 (n. 200)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	62,48%	49,5%	3,281	,0011	++
Negative	32,44%	47,5%	3,895	,0001	++
On-record	5,08%	3%	1,232	,2183	
Off-record	0%	0%	-	-	

From these comparisons we can conclude that, in general, the groups of this study differed considerably in their use of politeness in the wikis, being most of the differences related to the frequency of use of positive and negative politeness strategies. Some wikis, such as wikis number #1 and #6, showed a relative balance between the use of positive and negative politeness strategies, and this is why the comparison between them does not result in significant differences (see Table 11 above). On the other hand, other wikis have a clear divergence in the percentages of use of positive and negative politeness strategies. This is the case of wikis number #3 and #5, being the former the one with the most unequal percentages. Consequently, the comparison between wikis number #3 and #6 in Table 13 above provides the most significant differences in the usage of politeness strategies. In other words, approximately three out of four politeness strategies in wiki #3 were positive, while only one was negative, while wiki #6 presented a balanced positive-negative strategies ratio. The comparison between wikis number #1 and #3, as represented in Table 9, also indicates important differences in the use of positive and negative politeness strategies among both wikis, since wiki #1 has more balanced percentages. Table 10, which shows the results of contrasting wikis number #1 and #5, reveals that the members of wiki #5 have a clearer tendency towards positive politeness than those in wiki #1. Besides, it is in this pair of wikis where we encounter the only remarkable difference in the use of off-record strategies, being the participants of wiki #1 the ones that use this kind of strategy more often. Tables 13 and 14 compare wikis #3 and #5 with wiki #6, resulting again in significant differences: #3 and #5, present higher percentages of positive politeness when compared to #6, which presents more even percentages of positive and negative politeness.

The next step in our analysis was to analyze whether the existing differences among the frequency of positive and negative politeness strategies used in the wikis had any kind of impact on the participants' interaction and collaboration processes. For this purpose we

performed a Pearson correlation test which allowed us to determine if there was a clear or significant relation between the number of politeness strategies found in each wiki and the number of editions made by the group members in the conclusion page. Thus, the variable 'number of politeness strategies' taken from the members' interactions made in the discussion sections of the wikis was correlated with the variable 'number of editions of the conclusion page'. The latter variable is regarded as an indicator of collaborative work between the members of the groups, who revised each others' work and improved, completed or edited it. Table 15 below contains the data used in the Pearson correlation test, containing the figures corresponding to the variables under analysis. Table 16 shows the results of the test and, lastly, Figure 7 displays a dispersion graphic which compares the pairs of values.

Table 15. Number of politeness strategies and revisions of the conclusion page by wiki

Wiki	Politeness strategies (n.)	Revisions (n.)
Wiki #1	209	21
Wiki #2	5	6
Wiki #3	864	15
Wiki #4	9	11
Wiki #5	669	25
Wiki #6	200	14
Wiki #7	26	9

Table 16. Pearson correlation coefficient between politeness and revisions

	Politeness	Revisions
Politeness	1	
Editions	0,62344288	1

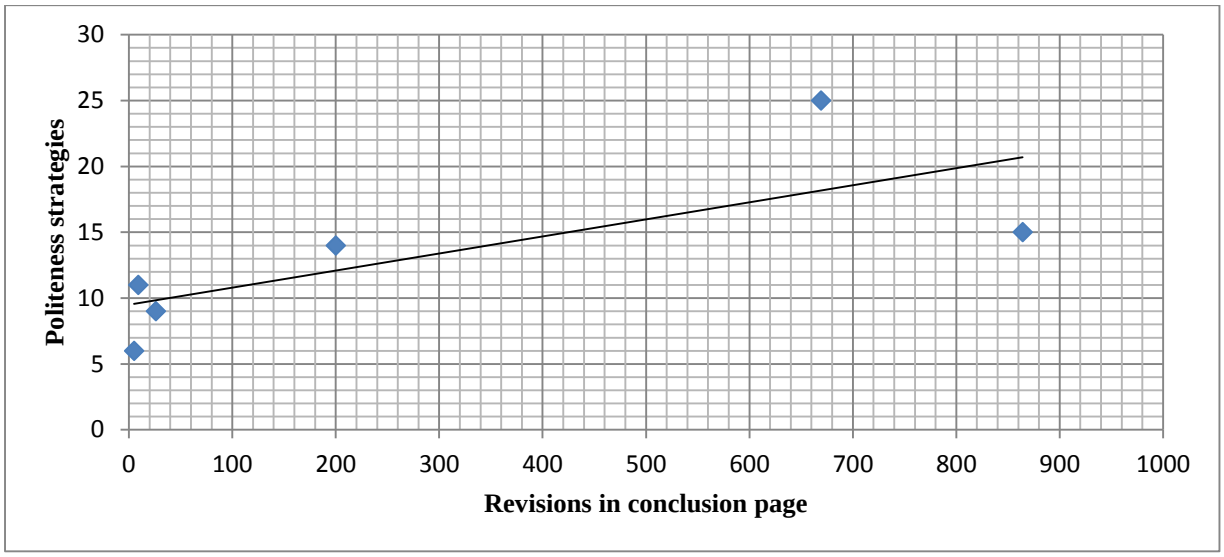

Figure 7. Graphic representation of the correlation between number of politeness strategies and revisions

As we can see in the Table 15, wikis with more politeness strategies and, consequently, more interaction, tended to present more editions in the conclusion page than those with smaller samples in the variable 'politeness strategies'. Table 16, which contains the result of the Pearson correlation coefficient, confirms this tendency, since the result obtained is r = 0,62. This coefficient corresponds to a moderate positive correlation. Furthermore, the graph in Figure 7 serves us to observe how the points in the scatter plot adhere in an approximate way to the trend line, which is an ascending one, indicating that the correlation is positive. This means that there is a moderate possibility that the use of politeness influences interaction and collaboration among group members in the wiki. The results also reveal that those groups that commented less in the discussion pages of their wikis tended to work in a more individualistic way, as opposed to those groups that discussed issues more actively and reviewed their conclusions page more often.

A qualitative observation of the characteristics of the conclusion pages provided additional relevant results. On the one hand, we checked whether the perceived moderate correlation between politeness and revisions was observable in the conclusions page and, on

the other, we also examined whether the differences in the typology of politeness employed had an impact on collaboration.

Table 17 below summarizes the characteristics of the wikis of this study, including the qualitative examination of the characteristics of the text written by the group members in their conclusion pages.

Table 17. Characteristics of individual wikis: politeness strategies, revisions and observations on the conclusion pages

	Politeness strategies (n.)	Revisions (n.)	Observations on conclusion page	Assessment on collaboration
Wiki #1	209	21	Cohesive text; use of pronoun 'we'	Collaborative work
Wiki #2	5	6	Paragraphs are preceded by the name of the writer	Individual work
Wiki #3	864	15	Cohesive text; use of pronoun 'we'	Collaborative work
Wiki #4	9	11	Paragraphs followed by the name of the writer; short common paragraph at the end using the pronoun 'we'	Mostly individual work
Wiki #5	669	25	Cohesive text; use of pronoun 'we'	Collaborative work
Wiki #6	200	14	Cohesive text; use of pronoun 'we'	Collaborative work
Wiki #7	26	9	Conclusions divided by the nationality of the writers; use of pronoun 'we'[1]; members' names attached to certain comments	Mostly individual work

The previous table shows that the qualitative analysis of the conclusion pages seems to match those findings obtained previously from the quantitative analysis of the correlation between the number of politeness strategies and the number of editions found on the conclusion pages

[1] The participants in this wiki presented two different opinions analyzed from a Spanish and a Polish point of view respectively. Therefore, although the subject of the sentences is a 'we', it corresponds to each pair of students of those nationalities but not to the whole group. In fact, participants in this wiki did not write any paragraphs stating their conclusions as a whole group.

of the wikis. These results are in line with the previous findings, since those wikis with lower numbers of politeness strategies (implying, therefore, less interaction between group members) and a fewer amount of revisions of the conclusion page tended to suggest individualistic work. On the other hand, wikis with a recurrent use of politeness strategies and an abundant number of revisions of the conclusion page showed clear signs of collaborative work in the final product.

Table 17 is also useful to ascertain whether the differences in the use of politeness strategies within those wikis with relatively big samples had an influence on the collaboration process that took place between the group members. As we mentioned before, wikis number #1, #3, #5 and #6 contained abundant instances of politeness strategies. From those four wikis, wiki #3 and wiki #6 represented the most divergent cases; wiki #3 was characterized by using mostly positive politeness strategies (n.632/73,15% of all the politeness strategies encountered), whereas in wiki #6 there was a balance between the number of occurrences of positive and negative politeness strategies found (n.99/49,5% and n.97/47,5%, respectively). We can see, however, that even though the predominance of certain types of politeness strategies varies from one wiki to another, the results, regarding collaboration, are the same for wiki #3 and wiki #6, since both of their conclusion pages show clear signs of collaborative group work.

Hence, from these quantitative and qualitative analyses we can conclude that the presence of politeness strategies and a high degree of interaction are crucial indicators of collaboration among group members. Moreover, these findings also seem to indicate that the use of politeness strategies have a positive impact on the collaborative process, regardless of whether they are positive or negative politeness strategies. We can resolve, then, that, as long as participants discuss and comment their ideas and decisions in the wiki employing, to that end, politeness devices of any kind, there will be a propensity towards collaborative learning.

In other words, both positive and negative politeness strategies led to collaboration among the group members. Positive politeness strategies allow group members to create a friendly environment, while negative politeness strategies facilitate showing respect and appreciation for each other and valuing each others' autonomy. The existence of bald on-record strategies, in turn, seems to be linked with situations in which maximum efficiency is required, while off-record strategies are usually chosen for requests. However, the number of samples of on- and off- record strategies found in our corpus did not represent an amount that was significant enough to allow us to determine the effects of their use in collaborative work.

RQ3. Does the use of politeness strategies in wiki-mediated exchanges differ when compared to exchanges via other asynchronous on-line communication tools, such as e-mail?

The third research question of the present study aimed to investigate the possible differences and similarities between the politeness strategies used in wiki exchanges and those employed in a different asynchronous on-line communication tool such as e-mail. In order to address this issue, we took Vinagre's (2008) study and carried out a comparison between her findings on the use of politeness strategies in e-mail exchanges and the results obtained in this study. Thus, we used a two sample t-test between percentages to determine whether the proportions of each type of strategy were significantly different in both on-line communication tools. The alpha-level or error rate employed was again 0,05. This value, in turn, generated a t-value of 1,96 and a p-value of ,05 for these data. Table 18 below summarizes the percentages of use of the different types of politeness strategies found in both studies, as well as the results of the t-test. Significant results are indicated by two plus signs (++). Figure 8, in turn, provides a visual representation of the differences between the findings in both studies.

Table 18. Comparison of politeness strategies in wikis and e-mails

Politeness type	E-mails (n. 383)	Wikis (n. 1982)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	96,4%	65,1%	12,257	,0000	++
Negative	3,6%	31,5%	11,261	,0000	++
On-record	0,0%	3,1%	3,491	,0005	++
Off-record	0,0%	0,3%	1,073	,2834	

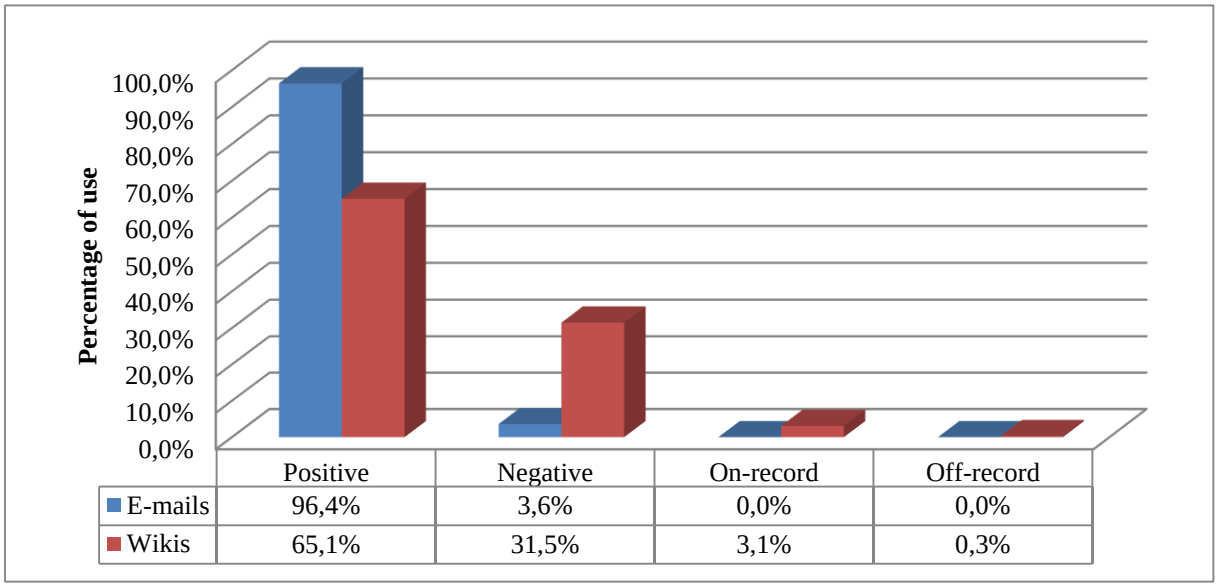

Figure 8. Use of politeness strategies in e-mails and wikis

As Table 18 and Figure 8 illustrate, the differences between the percentages of positive and negative politeness strategies in both studies were significant. The introductory e-mail exchanges from Vinagre's (2008) study were characterized by an overwhelming use of positive politeness strategies (96,4% of all the politeness strategies found), while the wiki exchanges analyzed in this study showed a somewhat more balanced distribution between positive and negative strategies, even though the positive ones are still more numerous (65,1% vs. 31,5%). We can find another significant difference in the percentages of use of bald on-record strategies; while no instances were found in the study on e-mail exchanges, a small but meaningful amount (n. 61/3,1%) of on-record strategies were identified in the exchanges via wiki.

These differences might be motivated to a great extent by other existing dissimilarities between both studies. First, the participants in Vinagre's study were not acquaintances, as it happened in this study. The students who exchanged e-mails belonged to different universities in different countries, so the degree of familiarity between the participants varied a lot when comparing both settings. Secondly, the discursive functions fulfilled in the e-mails were radically different when compared to those in the wiki exchanges. While the most common functions in the latter study were providing feedback, expressing personal opinions or requesting, among others, the participants in the e-mail tandem project endeavored to introduce each other, providing personal information and looking for common interests. The following samples, extracted from Vinagre's (2008:1027) study, help to illustrate the nature of these introductory e-mails. They are the first e-mail that both students sent each other, and they are written half in Spanish and half in English, since that was a requirement of the exchange so that both students would have linguistic input and output in their non-native language.

> Hola Maria, (P+4)
> Soy Ann, y estoy estudiando aquí en Trinity College Dublín (Irlanda). Pero vivo en Londres, en realidad soy inglesa pero quería estudiar aquí. No hay muchos ingleses aquí porque se tiene que solicitar para las universidades irlandesas, por un sistema distinto de lo que hay en Inglaterra. Es mi de segundo año de estudiar, mi asignatura es la psicología y el español es un curso adicional porque durante el año que viene me gustaría estudiar en España (P+7). I do not know what else to tell you! (P+13) But (P-2), speak soon (P+10), (P+11) and I am glad we are in contact! (P+12), (P+14) (es más fácil escribir en inglés!) (P + 7)
> Ann
>
> Hi, (P + 4)
> I am very pleased to receive news from you (P+2). I am studying Translation and Interpretation here in Madrid. It is my first year. I am very interested in the study of

language. I can speak French because I have made all my studies in Paris and I am learning German. It is quite difficult. [. . .]

And now my piece of Spanish writing.

Menudo cambio: De Londres a Dublin! (P+2) ¿Por qué quieres estudiar en Irlanda? (P+1) En mi caso (P+7) cambié Paris por Madrid porque me gusta mucho más la vida en España (P+13). La gente es más abierta y divertida (P+13). El tiempo es mejor, y también los chicos son más guapos (P+13). Esto último es broma (P+8). Por cierto ¿te has informado ya sobre las universidades españolas para cursar tu tercer año de carrera aquí? (P+2)

Tienes razón es más fácil escribir en nuestra lengua materna. (P+5), (P+7), (P+15)

Bueno, hasta pronto, (P+4), (P+11)

Maria

As we can elicit from the previous samples, the main functions that the participants of this exchange were trying to accomplish were to get to know each other and to look for common interests and characteristics, so that they could find topics to develop and discuss in further e-mails. These functions have a clear relation with positive politeness, since, as we already mentioned, when people share personal experiences they tend to use positive politeness strategies, such as 'claiming common ground' (P+7), 'exaggerating interest in the reader' (P+2), 'using in-group identity markers' (P+4) and 'attending to the reader's goods, wants or needs' (P+1). All these strategies are present in the short dialog via e-mail presented above, together with some other positive politeness strategies whose objective is to create a climate of "solidarity, like-mindedness and friendship" (Vinagre, 2008:1031).

It is also important to remember that the negative politeness strategies present in the current study tended to concentrate on specific functions, including those of providing corrective feedback and giving personal opinions. It seems logical to think that these functions are not typical of introductory e-mails between strangers. This would explain the little presence that negative politeness strategies has in Vinagre's study on introductory e-mails.

It also seems unlikely to find bald on-record strategies in the first on-line exchange between strangers, since they need to be careful with their language in order to create a good impression on the reader. If we take into account the fact that the e-mails belong to a foreign language telecollaborative exchange, we can assume that the students' awareness of their use of the language is even more emphasized. In this specific exchange, participants were required to carry out tasks together via e-mail, so we also consider that they were interested in establishing a good relationship with their partner. All these aspects are connected to the nature of the collaborative process and therefore, the participants in the study avoided threatening their partner's face by using non-redressive strategies as a means to ensure the success of the exchange.

From this analysis we can conclude, then, that the differences in the use of politeness strategies in wikis and e-mails are not a consequence of the ICT tool used to communicate, but on the specific functions of the messages that the participants had to write and on the inner characteristics of the relationship between the participants.

The next sections include a summary of all the findings collected in this study, as well as their implications, limitations and suggestions for further research.

5. Conclusions and implications

This study has analyzed the use of politeness strategies in collaborative exchanges via wiki. It has attempted to answer certain research questions and aimed to test some hypotheses in regards to the relation between linguistic politeness and collaborative learning. To start with, we departed from the hypothesis that on-line communication does not differ at all from face-to-face interaction, and that, for this reason, we would encounter profuse samples of linguistic politeness in the exchanges under analysis. This hypothesis proved to be true after annotating the corpus, which contained almost 1982 instances of politeness strategies. Regarding their typology, we ascertained that both positive and negative politeness devices were common in

the corpus, with a predominance of positive over negative politeness (65,1% vs. 31,5%, respectively). Thus, our initial assumption which, based on previous literature, stated that we expected to find a higher frequency of positive politeness strategies was also accurate. Additionally, we were able to find isolated instances of bald on-record (3,1%) and off-record strategies (0,3%), which, though infrequent, provided us with some appealing insights about their use.

Furthermore, we observed that more than half the politeness strategies found belonged to very specific realizations, mostly 'P+4: using in-group identity markers' (26,03%) 'P-2: hedging' (17,1%), 'P+15: giving gifts to the addressee' (7,62%), 'P+13: giving or asking for reasons' (6,21%) and 'P-1: being conventionally indirect' (4,84%).

A qualitative and detailed analysis of some samples from the corpus contributed to attain more information about the nature and distribution of the politeness strategies in our corpus. In this light, we analyzed different fragments where the participants fulfilled different discourse functions, such as giving feedback, expressing personal opinions, alluding to personal experiences, providing opinions and beliefs, etc. The study of these samples clarified the distribution of linguistic politeness, since, for instance, functions like approving other members' work, sharing personal experiences or agreeing and disagreeing presented a tendency towards the use of positive politeness strategies. In an opposite fashion, providing corrective feedback and expressing opinions comprised more negative politeness devices due to the high face threat that they entail. Besides, we found some interesting examples of on- and off- record strategies in fragments containing requests.

Our hypotheses for the second research question were interrelated. First, we assumed that, the more interaction taking place in a wiki, the more politeness strategies we would find, so we agreed on regarding the use of politeness strategies as a sign of the participants' interaction and participation. Then, we hypothesized that, the higher the number of politeness

strategies instances (and therefore interaction) used in the discussion sections of the wikis, the higher the probability of finding traces of collaborative work. Hence, we expected to find a correlation between the number of politeness strategies used in a wiki and the number of editions of the conclusion page (an indicator of collaboration). These hypotheses were, to a certain degree, accurate. A statistical test proved that there was a moderate correlation between the two variables mentioned before, meaning that a higher degree of politeness in the interactions among group members led to collaboration, while a low number of politeness strategies and, therefore, low interaction, resulted in individual work.

Another interesting finding attained from the statistical tests performed was the confirmation that the members of the different wikis used politeness strategies differently. Some wikis showed a clear preference for positive politeness strategies, while others accomplished a balance between positive and negative strategies. Nevertheless, these differences did not result in an impact on the collaboration process between the participants of the study. This can be explained by the fact that every kind of politeness strategy leads to collaboration, and what is important is the presence of these devices while the group members interact, regardless of whether they are positive or negative. Each type has a different function to fulfill, and negative politeness can be more appropriate in some contexts where positive politeness would not work in an equally effective way.

Finally, the hypothesis we assumed for the third research question was that we would encounter important differences between the results of this study those of Vinagre's (2008) research on politeness in introductory e-mail exchanges. As we believed, the functions, characteristics and settings of both types of exchanges differed greatly, to the extent that we found significant differences between our study, with a positive-negative politeness ratio of 65,1% vs. 31,5% and Vinagre's one, containing a 96,4% vs. 3,6%. We believe this contrast was caused by the discourse functions fulfilled by the participants in both studies: whereas the

participants in the e-mail tandem program wrote about personal experiences and looked for common features (functions that are mostly oriented towards positive politeness), the members in the wikis of this study fulfilled functions which required the use of both positive and negative politeness.

In conclusion, this study has tried to shed some light on the still incipient field of the study of interaction in on-line environments, showing that politeness is a crucial feature in on-line communication, entailing capital importance for collaboration. It is important, therefore, that teachers, when trying to foster telecollaborative learning, promote also dialogue and active discussion among the students. Effective interaction between learners seems to be an aspect of paramount relevance for collaborative work to occur. Even though it would not be necessary to teach them how to use politeness strategies, since they are learned as part of one's culture, it is essential to make them aware of their role in avoiding misunderstandings. This awareness is especially valuable in on-line collaborative exchanges, where non-linguistic clues are very limited or inexistent and where people from different cultures and, therefore, with different perspectives on the use of politeness, communicate.

The results of the present study have also proven that wikis are suitable tools for collaboration among learners, since, while used appropriately, they become "a working collaborative writing environment, knowledge base, discussion forum, media repository, and the evolving documentary record of a community of peers" (Maxwell & Felczak, 2008:90). Nonetheless, their convenience is limited, as it happens with most on-line communication tools, to a previously outlined and clearly defined pedagogical usage.

6. Limitations and suggested lines for further research

This study has not aimed to be an exhaustive analysis of politeness in on-line communication tools, but, rather, a case study or investigation on a small corpus of data. The taxonomy used in order to annotate the politeness strategies, though generally acclaimed by its adequacy,

might impose some restrictions or drawbacks regarding the objectivity of the analysis. As Burke and Kraut (2008) point out, "the strategies are ambiguous, partially overlapping, and fall at many different levels of communication" (p. 282), making the process of annotating the corpus highly difficult and often subjective. However, we consider that, even though categorizing particular strategies under each specific realization may entail some errors and subjective judgments, most of the study focuses on general types of politeness (positive, negative, on- and off-record), which narrows the chances to classify a strategy incorrectly.

The validity of the present research study could be tested by applying the same methodology to bigger corpora, or by administering the same analysis to exchanges made by speakers of a different culture, so as to ascertain whether there are clear trends that relate culture to the use of specific politeness strategies in on-line exchanges.

Due to the space and time limitations of this study, it was not possible to perform a more detailed study to research the relation between discourse functions and linguistic politeness, which was based purely on qualitative observations. Further research on this correlation between discourse functions and linguistic politeness will be of interest for future studies.

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Appendix 1. Brown and Levinson's original taxonomy of politeness strategies

Bald on-record strategies	
Emergency	*Your pants are on fire!*
Maximum efficiency	*Listen, I've got an idea*
Formulaic entreaties	*Excuse me*
Power show-off	*Bring me more wine*

Positive politeness strategies	
Claim common ground	
1- Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs and goods)	*What a beautiful vase this is! Where did it come from?*
2- Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)	*What a fantastic garden you have!*
3- Intensify interest to H	*I come down the stairs, and what do you think I see? A huge mess!*
4- Use in-group identity markers	*Bring me your dirty clothes to wash, honey*
5- Seek agreement	*The weather is awful today, isn't it?*
6- Avoid disagreement	*A: Have you got friends?* *B: I have friends. So-called friends. I had friends. Let me put it that way.*
7- Presuppose/raise /assert common ground	*I really had a hard time learning to drive, you know.*
8- Joke	*How about lending me this old heap of junk? (Addressee's new Cadillac)*
Convey cooperation	
9- Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants	*Look, I know you want the car back by 5, so shouldn't I go to town now?*
10- Offer, promise	*I'll drop by sometime next week*
11- Be optimistic	*I'm sure you won't mind if I borrow your typewriter.*
12- Include both H and S in the activity	*Let's have a cookie, then. (i.e. me)*
13- Give or ask for reasons	*Why don't we go to the seashore!*
14- Assume or assert reciprocity	*I'll clean the car this time because you cleaned it last week*
Fulfill H's want	
15- Give gifts to reader (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)	*Thanks a lot! I agree with you.*

Negative politeness strategies	
1- Be conventionally indirect	*Can you please pass the salt?*
2- Question, hedge	*I rather think it's hopeless*
3- Be pessimistic	*You couldn't possibly lend me your lawnmower*
4- Minimize the imposition	*I just want to ask you if you could lend me a tiny bit of paper*
5- Give deference	*I don't think you ought to do that, Mr. President*
6- Apologize	*I'm sorry to bother you, but…*
7- Impersonalize	*One shouldn't do things like that (you shouldn't)*
8- State the FTA as a general rule	*Passengers will please refrain from… (you will…)*
9- Nominalize	*I am surprised at your failure to reply*
10- Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H	*I'd be eternally grateful if you would…*

Off-record politeness strategies	
Violate relevance maxim	
1- Give hints	*This soup's bit bland (c.i. Pass the salt)*
2- Give association clues	*Are you going to market tomorrow? ... There's a market tomorrow, I suppose (c.i. Give me a ride there).*
3- Presuppose	*John's the bathtub yet again (Criticism)*
Violate quantity maxim	
4- Understate	*It's not half bad (c.i. S thinks it's surprisingly good).*
5- Overstate	*There were a million people in the Co-op tonight! (Excuse for being late)*
6- Use tautologies	*War is war (Excuse)*
Violate quality maxim	
7- Use contradictions	*Well, John is here and he isn't here*
8- Be ironic	*Lovely neighbourhood, eh? (in a slum)*
9- Use metaphors	*Harry's real fish (different connotations)*
10- Use rhetorical questions	*Just why would I have done that?*
Violate manner maxim	
11- Be ambiguous	*John's a pretty sharp (different connotations)*
12- Be vague	*Perhaps someone did something naughty*
13- Over-generalize	*The lawn has got to be mown*
14- Displace H	*Diana, could you pass me the salt? (hoping that Peter who is closer will do it)*
15- Be incomplete, use ellipsis	*Well, if one leaves one's tea on the wobbly table…*

Appendix 2. Complete list of tables comparing the use of politeness in individual wikis

Politeness type	Wiki #1 (n. 209)	Wiki #2 (n. 5)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	54,07%	40%	0,624	,5336	
Negative	42,58%	60%	0,778	,4377	
On-record	2,39%	0%	0,350	,7268	
Off-record	0,96%	0%	0.220	,8260	

Politeness type	Wiki #1 (n. 209)	Wiki #3 (n. 864)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	54,07%	73,15%	5,373	,0000	++
Negative	42,58%	24,77%	5,132	,0000	++
On-record	2,39%	1,74%	0,623	,5334	
Off-record	0,96%	0,35%	1.158	,2470	

Politeness type	Wiki #1 (n. 209)	Wiki #4 (n. 9)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	54,07%	55.56%	0,088	,9301	
Negative	42,58%	44.44%	0,110	,9121	
On-record	2,39%	0%	0,350	,7268	
Off-record	0,96%	0%	0.220	,8260	

Politeness type	Wiki #1 (n. 209)	Wiki #5 (n. 669)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	54,07%	62,48%	2,171	,0302	++
Negative	42,58%	32,44%	2,685	,0074	++
On-record	2,39%	5,08%	1,648	,0997	
Off-record	0,96%	0%	2,537	,0113	++

Politeness type	Wiki #1 (n. 209)	Wiki #6 (n. 200)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	54,07%	49,5%	0,925	,3557	
Negative	42,58%	47,5%	1,000	,3180	
On-record	2,39%	3%	0,381	,7032	
Off-record	0,96%	0%	1,389	,1656	

Politeness type	Wiki #1 (n. 209)	Wiki #7 (n. 26)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	54,07%	84.62%	2,971	,0033	++
Negative	42,58%	11,54%	3,058	,0025	++
On-record	2,39%	3,85%	0,445	,6566	
Off-record	0,96%	0%	1,389	,1656	

Politeness type	Wiki #2 (n. 5)	Wiki #3 (n. 864)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	40%	73,15%	1,664	,0965	
Negative	60%	24,77%	1,815	,0629	
On-record	0%	1,74%	0,298	,7661	
Off-record	0%	0,35%	0,133	,8946	

Politeness type	Wiki #2 (n. 5)	Wiki #4 (n. 9)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	40%	55.56%	0.558	,5871	
Negative	60%	44.44%	0.558	,5871	
On-record	0%	0%	-	-	
Off-record	0%	0%	-	-	

Politeness type	Wiki #2 (n. 5)	Wiki #5 (n. 669)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	40%	62,48%	1,033	,3018	
Negative	60%	32,44%	1,309	,1909	
On-record	0%	5,08%	0,517	,6052	
Off-record	0%	0%	-	-	

Politeness type	Wiki #2 (n. 5)	Wiki #6 (n. 200)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	40%	49,5%	0,420	,6752	
Negative	60%	47,5%	0,553	,5811	
On-record	0%	3%	0,393	,6947	
Off-record	0%	0%	-	-	

Politeness type	Wiki #2 (n. 5)	Wiki #7 (n. 26)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	40%	84.62%	2,186	,0371	++
Negative	60%	11,54%	2,512	,0178	++
On-record	0%	3,85%	0,446	,6589	
Off-record	0%	0%	-	-	

Politeness type	Wiki #3 (n. 864)	Wiki #4 (n. 9)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	73,15%	55.56%	1,182	,2375	
Negative	24,77%	44.44%	1,356	,1714	
On-record	1,74%	0%	0,399	,6899	
Off-record	0,35%	0%	0,178	,8589	

Politeness type	Wiki #3 (n. 864)	Wiki #5 (n. 669)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	73,15%	62,48%	4,460	,0000	++
Negative	24,77%	32,44%	3,313	,0010	++
On-record	1,74%	5,08%	3,686	,0002	++
Off-record	0,35%	0%	1,582	,1259	

Politeness type	Wiki #3 (n. 864)	Wiki #6 (n. 200)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	73,15%	49,5%	7,495	,0000	++
Negative	24,77%	47,5%	6,381	,0000	++
On-record	1,74%	3%	1,154	,2490	
Off-record	0,35%	0%	0,838	,4023	

Politeness type	Wiki #3 (n. 864)	Wiki #7 (n. 26)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	73,15%	84.62%	1,305	,1921	
Negative	24,77%	11,54%	1,548	,1220	
On-record	1,74%	3,85%	0,797	,2490	
Off-record	0,35%	0%	0,838	,4023	

Politeness type	Wiki #4 (n. 9)	Wiki #5 (n. 669)	T-value	P-value
Positive	55.56%	62,48%	0,426	,6705
Negative	44.44%	32,44%	0,763	,4458
On-record	0%	5,08%	0,694	,4881
Off-record	0%	0%	-	-

Politeness type	Wiki #4 (n. 9)	Wiki #6 (n. 200)	T-value	P-value
Positive	55.56%	49,5%	0,356	,7224
Negative	44.44%	47,5%	0,180	,8574
On-record	0%	3%	0,527	,5986
Off-record	0%	0%	-	-

Politeness type	Wiki #4 (n. 9)	Wiki #7 (n. 26)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	55.56%	84.62%	1,790	,0827	
Negative	44.44%	11,54%	2,127	,0410	++
On-record	0%	3,85%	0,597	,5544	
Off-record	0%	0%	-	-	

Politeness type	Wiki #5 (n. 669)	Wiki #6 (n. 200)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	62,48%	49,5%	3,281	,0011	++
Negative	32,44%	47,5%	3,895	,0001	++
On-record	5,08%	3%	1,232	,2183	
Off-record	0%	0%	-	-	

Politeness type	Wiki #5 (n. 669)	Wiki #7 (n. 26)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	62,48%	84.62%	2,298	,0219	++
Negative	32,44%	11,54%	2,248	,0249	++
On-record	5,08%	3,85%	0,281	,7785	
Off-record	0%	0%	-	-	

Politeness type	Wiki #6 (n. 200)	Wiki #7 (n. 26)	T-value	P-value	
Positive	49,5%	84.62%	3,378	,0009	++
Negative	47,5%	11,54%	3,481	,0006	++
On-record	3%	3,85%	0,235	,8142	
Off-record	0%	0%	-	-	