



<https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-41045>

EDN: KQVSDX

Research article / Научная статья

## Invitations in Spanish and Russian communicative cultures: Sociocultural context and politeness strategies

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### Abstract

The realization of the speech act of inviting is susceptible to situational and sociocultural context. To issue an appropriate invitation, speakers must respect cultural norms and use politeness strategies accepted in each communicative culture. The aim of this study is to identify conventionalized linguistic patterns and politeness strategies common in the realization of everyday invitations in Spanish and Russian. The analyzed corpus consists of 662 written samples collected through the Discourse Completion Task. The samples correspond to three communicative situations with different configurations of pragmatic parameters of social distance and power. The study offers a taxonomy of most productive invitation formulae in Russian and Spanish, grounded in the proposals of Blum-Kulka *et al.* (1989) and García (2008). The analysis is based on the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) and supported by the worksheet of the ES.POR.ATENUACION project (Albelda Marco *et al.* 2014). The findings indicate the presence of similar tendencies in Spanish and Russian: when greater distance and/or higher status of the interlocutor is perceived, speakers give preference to deference politeness strategies, while solidarity politeness strategies prevail in situations of closer proximity. The predominant differences are observed in the selection of invitation sub-strategies. Despite being classified as solidarity cultures, each language exhibits distinct linguistic patterns.

**Key words:** *invitation, speech act, politeness, situational context, sociocultural context, Spanish, Russian*

### For citation:

Shorokhova, Elena & Palma Peña-Jiménez. 2025. Invitations in Spanish and Russian communicative cultures: Sociocultural context and politeness strategies. *Russian Journal of Linguistics* 29 (2). 362–385. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-41045>

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## Приглашения в русской и испанской коммуникативных культурах: социокультурный контекст и стратегии вежливости

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### Аннотация

Реализация речевого акта «приглашение» обусловлена особенностями ситуативного и социокультурного контекста. Для того, чтобы приглашение соответствовало социокультурным нормам, говорящий должен использовать стратегии вежливости, принятые в данной коммуникативной культуре. Цель данного исследования – выявить конвенциональные языковые модели реализации речевого акта «приглашение» и стратегии вежливости, наиболее часто используемые в испанском и русском языках. В ходе исследования было проанализировано 662 приглашения, полученных посредством задания на завершение дискурсивного теста. Информантам анкетирования были предложены три коммуникативные ситуации с различной конфигурацией прагматических параметров социальной дистанции и дистанции власти. На основе полученных данных была разработана классификация наиболее продуктивных стратегий приглашения в русском и испанском языках, основанная на типологии директивных актов (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989) и приглашений (García 2008). В основе исследования лежит теория вежливости (Brown & Levinson 1987) и модель анализа средств хеджирования, предложенная участниками проекта ES.POR.ATENUACION (Albelda Marco et al. 2014). Результаты исследования показывают наличие сходных тенденций в испанском и русском языках: при наличии большей социальной дистанции и/или дистанции власти говорящие отдают предпочтение стратегиям вежливости дистанцирования, в то время как в приглашениях, адресованных близким друзьям, преобладают стратегии вежливости солидарности/сближения. Несмотря на то, что обе культуры относятся к культурам сближения, в каждом языке имеются свои культурно-специфические языковые модели реализации речевого акта «приглашение».

**Ключевые слова:** приглашение, речевой акт, вежливость, испанский язык, русский язык, ситуативный контекст, социокультурный контекст

### Для цитирования:

Shorokhova E.S., Peña-Jiménez P. Invitations in Spanish and Russian communicative cultures: Sociocultural context and politeness strategies. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*. 2025. Vol. 29. № 2. P. 362–385. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-41045>

## 1. Introduction

Every communicative act entails a locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary act and it is unequivocally intentional and has an implicit purpose (Peña-Jiménez 2024). Nonetheless, when performing the same speech act, representatives of different cultures employ different communicative patterns and use different politeness strategies.

Each speech act, including invitations, presents conventionalized communicative patterns accepted by a linguistic and cultural community. However, in the field of intercultural pragmatics, there are few studies that analyze

sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic aspects of the realization of invitations in different communicative cultures. Thus, from a pragmatic perspective, invitations have been compared in British English and Japanese (Matsukawa 2024), English and Peninsular Spanish (Fernández-García 2024), Chinese and Peninsular Spanish (Liu 2023), American English and Peninsular Spanish (Barros García & Terkourafi 2014), Venezuelan Spanish and Argentinian Spanish (García 2008), Peninsular Spanish and French (Ruiz de Zarobe 2004), British English and Russian (Larina 2009), American English and Russian (Schelchkova 2013), and Peninsular Spanish and Russian (Shorokhova 2023).

The present study aims to compare the realization of the speech act of inviting in Spanish and Russian within the framework of politeness theory. In Shorokhova (in press), substantial differences have been identified in everyday invitations in these languages. Therefore, in this paper, we intend to extend the analysis and check the reliability of the results obtained from a different group of informants. This study addresses the following research questions:

1. Do invitations have conventionalized linguistic patterns in Spanish and Russian?
2. Which pragmalinguistic strategies can be used in Spanish and Russian to issue an invitation in different situational contexts?
3. Which politeness strategies can be employed to issue an invitation appropriate for the situational context?

This study is structured as follows. The theoretical framework is presented in the second section. It focuses on pragmatic variation and the relevance of sociocultural elements in language use. It also offers a brief review of the speech act of inviting and its relationship to politeness. In the third section, we describe the corpus and the parameters of analysis. In the fourth section, we present the obtained results, organized in two subsections, thus attending to the internal structure of the invitation. The fifth section discusses the main findings before providing concluding remarks.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### **2.1. Pragmatic variation and sociocultural elements**

Studies on cross-cultural pragmatics reveal that when speakers of different languages interact, they perform the same communicative acts, but their realization and the selection of politeness strategies may vary widely across cultures (e.g. Haugh & Chang 2019, Litvinova & Larina 2023, Zbenovich et al. 2024). When interlocutors do not pay attention to each other's sociocultural norms, their communicative behavior may sometimes be interpreted as impolite, which may lead to misunderstandings, miscommunication or even deterioration of interpersonal relations. Therefore, in order to achieve communicative success, it is essential to behave in accordance with the sociocultural norms underlying the linguistic system of those involved in communicative exchange.

The advent of the first theories of linguistic politeness gave rise to the emergence of studies in cross-cultural pragmatics. These studies sought to disprove the existence of universal patterns of politeness use. Based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, which identifies negative and positive politeness, authors drew a distinction between negative politeness cultures and positive politeness cultures (e.g. Larina 2009, Márquez Reiter 2000, Ogiermann 2009, Sifianou 1992). Thus, aiming to achieve the same communicative goals, representatives of cultures oriented towards negative politeness tend to use strategies based on respectful distancing, while in positive politeness cultures strategies that display solidarity and affection are predominantly used (Fernández-García & Ortiz Viso 2018).

In this study we focus on two cultures oriented towards solidarity and rapprochement where speakers feel the right to reduce the freedom of action of their interlocutor (Haverkate 2003, Zbenovich et al. 2024). According to recent studies, Spanish speakers seek to enhance group relations, while privacy and individuality are less important than in British culture, which is traditionally considered a distancing or negative politeness culture (Fernández-García & Ortiz Viso 2018). Consequently, *confianza* (trust) is highlighted as a basic need of the Spanish face and is associated with the idea that one is allowed to speak and act openly without fear of offence (Hernández Flores 2004). This can be especially shocking in interactions with representatives of distancing cultures.

Russian communicative culture is typified as a *we-culture* (Larina et al. 2017) where *sobornost'* (spiritual togetherness), collectivism, *obshchenie* (communication) and sincerity are the values that best describe the Russian face and underlie the use of this language (Larina & Ozyumenko 2016, Larina et al. 2017, Wierzbicka 2002). Hence, direct style is seen as a sign of sincerity, cordiality and solidarity, while indirect style and hints often suggest manipulation and generally give rise to mistrust (Larina 2009, Leech & Larina 2014, Ogiermann 2009).

Along with cultural factors, sociological features of the interlocutors and situational factors of the communicative act itself determine the use of politeness. When analyzing an utterance, the speaker's gender, age, socio-economic class, level of education and linguistic variety must be taken into consideration (Albelda Marco et al. 2014). In addition to the above, there are four factors related to the situational context (Albelda Marco 2008), namely:

1. The relations of power and solidarity that exist between speakers,
2. The degree of common knowledge and experience they possess,
3. The physical space in which they interact and their spatial position in it,
4. The subject matter of the communicative exchange.

Therefore, each communicative act must be adjusted to the relationship between the interlocutors, their roles and circumstances, the sociocultural norms and their constraints, which make the speaker know what is appropriate to do and say in a particular communicative situation (Spencer-Oatey & Kádár 2021). At the same time, the rights and obligations implied by interlocutors' roles are subject to their cultural variation.

## **2.2. Politeness in the speech act of inviting**

Invitations are a frequent socializing act. Based on the work of Isaacs and Clark (1990), we distinguish between genuine/unambiguous and ostensible invitations. The essential components of an unambiguous invitation are (1) the reference to time and place and (2) the request for a response (Wolfson et al. 1983: 117). It means that invitations share some features with offers, but unlike offers, they leave less space for negotiation and thus require fewer turns (Yu & Wu 2018).

According to the speech act theory, invitations are considered directive speech act (Searle 1979), since by issuing an invitation, the speaker intends to influence the addressee's behavior and convince him/her to perform a future action. However, unlike purely directive speech acts, invitations are free from obligation, urgency and need (Drew & Couper-Kuhlen 2014, Margutti et al. 2018), making them a non-impositive directive speech act (Iglesias Recuero 2001). Owing to this characteristic, in some situational contexts, such as academia, requests for service can be performed as invitations (Bardovi-Harlig 2019). Another aspect that distinguishes invitations from purely directive acts is their optionality: acceptance by the addressee is a necessary condition for the performance of the activity (Barron 2017, Wierzbicka 1987).

In addition to the directive nature, invitations contain a commissive force: by extending an invitation, even if not explicitly, the inviter commits him/herself to a future action and generally bears the costs involved in preparing and carrying out the activity (Haverkate 1994, Pérez Hernández 2001). Due to their dual nature, authors describe invitations as a hybrid speech act or commissive-directives (e.g. Bella 2009, Margutti et al. 2018, Pérez Hernández 2001, Vlasyan & Kozhukhova 2019). Consequently, communicative success depends on the addressee agreeing to participate in the proposed activity and the speaker fulfilling his/her promise (Eslami et al. 2016).

Given the hybrid nature of the speech act of inviting, its relationship to politeness is complex, which affects its formulation. As a directive act, invitations can threaten the interlocutor's face and limit his/her freedom to act (Brown & Levinson 1987). On the other hand, inviting is a way of boosting social cohesion and increasing solidarity among interlocutors (Barros García 2010, Bella 2009, García 1999, 2008, Haverkate 1994, Margutti et al. 2018). Moreover, invitations help to enhance the addressee's face, because the inviter tries to satisfy invitee's tastes and interests and recognizes him/her as a group member (Barros García 2010, Barros García & Terkourafi 2014, Bella 2009, 2019).

Considering that inviting can be, at the same time, pleasant and annoying for the person receiving the invitation (Ruiz de Zarobe 2004), the speaker should strike a balance between politeness strategies to extend an invitation that could meet the addressee's expectations and thus ensure communicative success. In order to reduce the threat to the addressee's face and issue a less imposing invitation, the speaker can use negative/deference politeness and mitigation tools. Positive/solidarity politeness, on the other hand, can help to reinforce closeness and solidarity between

the interlocutors and underline a positive attitude towards the other. It is worth mentioning that, to achieve the same ends, politeness strategies may vary from culture to culture (Eslami et al. 2023, Kordestanchi et al. 2023, Litvinova & Larina 2023, Margutti et al. 2018, Matsukawa 2024, Schelchikova 2013).

The invitations realization can be influenced not only by cultural norms but also by social variation. Fernández-García (2024) points out the different perception of direct and indirect invitations with respect to the level of academic education, with people without a university education being more likely to use direct strategies. There is also a difference between younger and older speakers: younger speakers tend to emphasize closeness and use positive politeness strategies, while older speakers try not to impose their will on the other and give more freedom to their interlocutor through interrogative constructions (Bella 2009, Fernández-García 2024). In this regard, it is noteworthy that the study by Vlasyan and Kozhukhova (2019), devoted to the analysis of invitations in Russian, concludes that younger people are also more likely to use the imperative, but unlike what happens in Greek and Spanish cultures, Russian adults do not avoid direct formulations and opt for performative utterances with the verb *приглашать* (to invite).

Based on these preliminary considerations, we aim in this paper to compare everyday invitations issued by young Spanish and Russian speakers, paying special attention to sociocultural elements.

### **3. Materials and methods**

#### **3.1. Participants**

The corpus analyzed in this study consists of written samples of invitation, which were collected via an anonymous survey in spring 2022 in Spain and in autumn 2022 in Russia. The surveys were distributed in two formats, on paper and electronically through *Microsoft Forms*.

128 students from Rey Juan Carlos University (Madrid, Spain) and 130 students from RUDN University (Moscow, Russia) collaborated in this survey. All informants were native speakers of Peninsular Spanish or Russian from Russia. The ages of the participants ranged from 17 to 25 years old. The present study does not take into account the gender of the subjects, although it may influence the production of the speech act in question.

#### **3.2. Data collection and preprocessing**

Data collection was carried out by means of a Discourse Completion Task (DCT). DCT is a commonly used instrument in cross-cultural pragmatics' research, since, compared to natural corpora, it allows for a more rigorous control of variables and for obtaining comparable data across different languages or varieties of a language (Barron 2022, Kasper 2008, Ogiermann 2009, Schneider 2012). This method is also considered suitable for determining communicative patterns accepted in each culture to perform a speech act, as well as for analyzing the use of

different pragmalinguistic resources in the expression of speech acts in each language (Bardovi-Harlig & Su 2023, Fernández-García 2022, Kasper 2008, Ogiermann 2009, Schneider 2012). In this regard, the data obtained through written questionnaires reflect what informants consider appropriate to say in a given situation. In other words, these data help us better understand what is socially accepted in different communicative cultures (Barron 2008: 43).

The present study approaches the speech act of inviting in three situations. Our informants had to extend an invitation for a coffee or equivalent to:

1. A close friend
2. A new colleague
3. The boss

The questionnaire provides a detailed description of the communicative situation including sociological characteristics of the addressee, the relationship between the interlocutors and the situational context. The English version of these questions appears below:

1. It's Friday evening. You're organizing a meet-up with your friends at your favorite bar in the city center. Now, you're either calling or messaging your best friend to invite him/her, and you say:

2. You work at company X. Every now and then, you and your colleagues like to go out for a coffee or drink after work. You're all about to head to the bar across the street, but there's a new colleague who doesn't know about your plan. It seems like a good opportunity to invite him/her. Your new colleague is about your age and seems friendly. So, you say:

3. You work at company X. Every now and then, you and your colleagues like to go out for a coffee or drink after work. You're all about to head to the bar across the street, and it seems like a good opportunity to invite your boss as well. Your boss has just stepped out of his/her office, and you say:

The situational factors were structured to enable the observation of how social distance and power relations influence the realization of invitations. Table 1 specifies the configuration of these pragmatic parameters in the three proposed situations. The symbols (+) and (-) define the social distance between the interlocutors. The symbols "S" and "H" represent the speaker and the hearer respectively, while the symbols (=), (<) and (>) indicate the power that one of the interlocutors has vis-à-vis the other.

*Table 1. Configuration of pragmatic factors of distance and power in each situation*

	Distance	Power
S1: close friend	-	S=H
S2: new colleague	+	S=H
S3: boss	-/+	S<H

Table 1 illustrates that familiarity, closeness and greater shared experience, as well as power equality describe the first situation. In the second situation, although

neither of the interlocutors has more power vis-à-vis the other, there is more social distance and less shared experience. The third invitation is addressed to a superior, so there is a hierarchical relationship in which the speaker is in an inferior position. Unlike the two previous situations, the distance is not clearly defined, and it is the informants' responsibility to determine the degree of closeness to the boss.

Given the criticism that informants must adopt an unfamiliar role, we decided not to specify the characteristics of the person extending the invitation. All proposed roles and communicative situations were familiar and related to participants' daily live situations. Moreover, to encourage more natural behavior, we included the option of not inviting. In these cases, participants were asked to provide an explanation. This decision affected the number of invitations obtained in each communicative situation (see table 2), as some informant reported feeling unwilling (S1) and/or uncomfortable to perform the act due to the social distance (S2) and/or hierarchy (S3).

*Table 2. Distribution of informants' responses for each language and communicative situation*

	Spanish	Russian
S1	120	113
S2	128	118
S3	92	91
Total	340	322

### 3.3. Procedure

Politeness is a social phenomenon that helps speakers to ensure effective communication, to manage interpersonal relationships and to praise the interlocutor's face. In other words, politeness strategies not only serve to mitigate threats to the interlocutor's face posed by the realization of a threatening speech act (Brown & Levinson 1987), but they can also produce an enhancing effect (Bayraktaroğlu & Sifianou 2001, Hernández Flores 2004, among others). To distinguish between these two functions of politeness, we use the terminology proposed by Scollon and Scollon (1983): deference politeness and solidarity politeness. Thus, deference politeness strategies include respectful distancing strategies and help to avoid or mitigate threats to the hearer's face, whereas solidarity politeness strengthens interpersonal ties and appeals to in-group membership.

When analyzing the realization of invitation, all samples were divided into a head act and supportive moves (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). The head act forms the core of the sequence, possessing the potential to independently fulfill the act's realization. Supportive moves function as adjuncts to the head act, serving to support, mitigate or intensify the speech act as external modifications. As a starting point, we used the politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) and the analysis worksheet developed by the ES.POR.ATENUACIÓN research



group (Albelda Marco et al. 2014) to correctly identify the mitigation tools whereby deference politeness is achieved.

Indirect speech acts are traditionally associated with deference politeness (Brown & Levinson 1987) and represents a mitigation tool (Albelda Marco et al. 2014), while direct speech act realization can be considered a solidarity politeness strategy (García 1999, 2008). Therefore, in the first phase of the study, we adapted the classifications of head acts of requests (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989) and invitations (García 1999, 2008, Ruiz de Zarobe 2004) to our corpus. Following the proposal of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), there are three levels of directness of invitation formulae, i.e. (1) direct or impositives, (2) conventionally indirect and (3) non-conventionally indirect strategies. For the sub-strategies, we used the terms proposed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and García (2008). The most productive sub-strategies found in our corpus are illustrated below.

Table 3. Classification of sub-strategies for issuing an invitation in Spanish and Russian

Sub-strategy	Examples	
	Spanish	Russian
<b>Direct (IMP)</b>		
Mood derivable	<b>Vente a tomar algo.</b> (Come for a drink (with us).)	<i>Мы сегодня собираемся в бар, приходи тоже.</i> (We're going to a bar tonight, come too.)
Mood derivable 1PI	<b>Vamos a tomar algo.</b> (Let's go for a drink.)	<i>Пошли с нами в бар.</i> (Let's go with us to a bar.)
Explicit performative	<b>Estás invitado.</b> (You're invited.)	<i>Приглашаем вас в бар.</i> (We invite you to the bar.)
Locution derivable	<i>¿Te vienes a tomar algo?</i> (Will you come for a drink?)	<i>Пойдёшь с нами в бар?</i> (Will you come to the bar with us?)
<b>Conventionally indirect strategies (CIS)</b>		
Wish-question	<i>¿Te apetece venirte a tomar algo?</i> (Do you want to come for a drink?)	<i>Хочешь пойти с нами в бар?</i> (Do you want to come to the bar with us?)
Suggestory formula	<i>¿Por qué no te vienes?</i> (Why don't you come (with us)?)	<i>Может сходим в бар сегодня?</i> (Maybe we'll go to a bar today?)
Pseudo-conditional statement	<i>Jefe, nos vamos a bajar a tomar algo en breve por si se quiere venir.</i> (Boss, we're going for a drink in a while in case you want to come.)	-
<b>Non-conventionally indirect strategies (NCIS)</b>		
Hints	<i>¿Haces algo hoy? Me apetece salir.</i> (Do you have plans for today? I want to go out.)	<i>Что делаешь вечером?</i> (What are you doing tonight?)

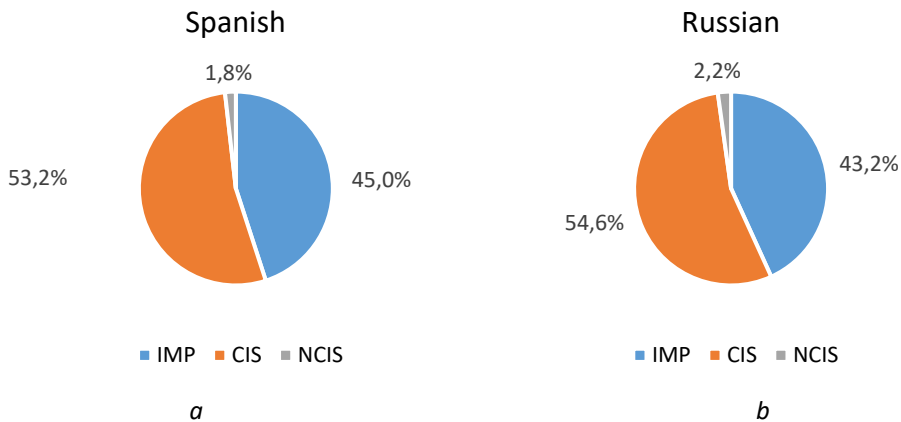
In addition to the invitation formula itself, supportive moves can produce the politeness social effect. While some moves, such as those that provide information about the event, are neutral to politeness, others represent deference or solidarity politeness strategies. Thus, preparators, grounders, minimizers, agreement-seeking expressions and apologies are associated with deference politeness, while insistences, promises of reward, expressions of understanding of and interest in the other, and emotional appeals reinforce interpersonal relationships and represent solidarity politeness strategies (García 2008).

Finally, in our analysis, we paid attention to the use of pronominal forms of address, as these not only reflect the degree of formality, but also convey established sociocultural dynamics. Accordingly, the informal T-form accounts for solidarity and familiarity, while the V-form signifies hierarchical relationship and deference (Zhou & Larina 2024).

#### 4. Data analysis and main results

##### 4.1. Analysis of politeness strategies in the head acts of invitation

Regardless of the invitee’s profile, the overall results reveal similar tendencies across both corpora: most invitations were produced using conventionally indirect strategies, with no significant differences observed between Spanish and Russian speakers (SP: 53.2%; RU: 54.6%) (see figures 1a and 1b).



Figures 1a and 1b. Relative frequency of super-strategies used in each language

Table 4 presents the distribution of strategies employed by Spanish and Russian informants in relation to the communicative situation. The head acts are categorized as deference or solidarity politeness strategies. The table also illustrates the use of internal modifiers with either mitigating or aggravating effects. As shown, both corpora exhibit a similar tendency: solidarity strategies are more common in invitations to a close friend (SP: 75%; RU: 67.3%) and their frequency

decreases with increased social distance between interlocutors (SP: 32.8%; RU: 32.2%) or when the invitee is a superior (SP: 25%; RU: 27.5%).

Table 4. Relative frequency of invitation sub-strategies and internal modifiers in each communicative situation and language

	S1		S2		S3	
	Spanish	Russian	Spanish	Russian	Spanish	Russian
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Head act</b>						
<b>Solidarity politeness</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>67.3</b>	<b>32.8</b>	<b>32.2</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>27.5</b>
Mood derivable	20.0	2.7	13.3	-	3.3	3.3
Mood derivable 1PI	2.5	38.0	-	16,1	-	4.4
Concealed command	2.5	4.4	0.8	-	1.1	-
Obligation statement	-	2.7	3.9	1,7	1.1	-
Performatives	-	1.8	-	1,7	4.3	7.7
Locution derivable	50.0	15.0	14.0	10,2	13.0	8.8
Want statement	-	2.7	0.8	2,5	2.2	3.3
<b>Deference politeness</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>32.7</b>	<b>67.2</b>	<b>67.8</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>72.5</b>
Ability-question	0.8	3.5	-	-	1.1	-
Wish-question	17.5	20.3	55.5	66.1	60.9	63.7
Agreement-question	-	2.7	-	0.85	1.1	3.3
Suggestory formula	-	2.7	2.3	0.85	-	2.2
Pseudo-conditional statements	2.5	-	8.6	-	11.9	-
Hints	4.2	3.5	0.8	-	-	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Internal modifiers</b>						
<b>Mitigators</b>						
Conditional tense	-	1.8	10.9	4.2	25.0	26.4
Negative question	-	9.7	-	56.8	-	67.0
Conditional clause	3.3	4.4	9.4	-	3.2	2.2
V-form of address	-	-	-	2.5	30.4	95.6
<b>Aggravators</b>						
Intensifiers	-	1.8	-	-	2.1	-

Differences are evident in the selection of sub-strategies used to perform the speech act of inviting in each situation. For instance, when inviting a close friend, Spanish informants prefer locution derivable, which placed third in Russian (SP: 50%; RU: 15%). This is an interrogative formulation whereby the speaker tries to ensure the participation of the addressee in the proposed event. The verbs *venir* (come) in Spanish (1) and *noĭmu* (go) in Russian (2) are used for this purpose. In Russian, it is also possible to omit the verb *noĭmu* (go) without affecting the interpretation of the utterance (3).

- (1) *Tía vamos a tomar unas cervecitas te vienes?* (SP43\_S1)  
*(Dude, we're going to have some beers, will you come?)*

- (2) *Привет! Мы собрались компанией в бар, пойдешь с нами?*  
(RU15\_S1)  
(Hi! We're going out to a bar, will you go with us?)
- (3) *Алё, привет. Мы сегодня в кафе, ты с нами?* (RU82\_S1)  
(Hello, hi. We're going to a cafe tonight, are you in?)

On two occasions these questions in Russian were intensified by the particle *же* [zhe], which increases the degree of insistence, since it conveys the speaker's conviction that the invitee intends to participate in the activity.

- (4) *Привет, мы сегодня идём в кафе, ты же с нами?* (RU4\_S1)  
(Hi, we're going to a cafe today, you're coming, right?)

In Russian, the sub-strategy most used for inviting a close friend is the mood derivable (40.7%). In Spanish, imperative utterances are also common and are the second most common sub-strategy (22.5%). However, if they use the imperative, Spaniards prefer to direct it towards the invitee (SP: 20%; RU: 2.7%) (5), whereas Russian informants try to emphasize solidarity and therefore opt for the inclusive imperative (SP: 2.5%; RU: 38%) (6).

- (5) *Vente bro que hemos quedado* (SP119\_S1)  
(Come bro, we're meeting up.)
- (6) *Пошли в бар, отдохнём!* (RU53\_S1)  
(Let's go to a bar, we'll relax!)

In both groups, the use of these sub-strategies decreases when participants perceive more distance to the invitee (S2) or when they are in a lower hierarchical position (S3). In these two situational contexts, the most prevalent sub-strategy is the wish-question (7, 8) which represents a strategy of deference politeness (S2: SP: 55.5%, RU: 66.1%; S3: SP: 60.9%, RU: 63.7%). The Spanish corpus contains more lexical variety, where the verbs *querer* (to want), *gustar* (to like), *apetecer* (to feel like) or even a more colloquial one like *rentar* (to rent) are used. In Russian, informants expressed all wish-questions with the verb *хотеть* (to want).

The deference politeness effect of wish-questions can be intensified by means of mitigating linguistic tactics, i.e. the use of verb tenses as pragmatic modifiers and the negative formulation of the question. The first tactic appears in both corpora and consists in the substitution of the present tense by the conditional, so that the utterance is moderated. The analysis indicates that this mechanism is more common in Spanish (11.5%) than in Russian (9.6%) and its use is associated with a hierarchical relationship in both corpora (SP: 25%; RU: 26.4%). The following examples illustrate the use of this mitigating mechanism:

- (7) *Buenas, (su nombre). ¿Qué tal el día de trabajo? Algunos de la oficina vamos a ir a tomar algo después del trabajo. ¿Te apetecería venir?*  
(SP33\_S3)  
(Hi, (his/her name). How was your day at work? Some of us from the office are going for a drink after work. Would you like to come?)

- (8) *NN, не хотели бы вы присоединиться к нам сегодня вечером? Мы идём в бар. (RU126\_S3)*  
(NN, wouldn't you like to join us this evening? We're going to a bar.)

Example 8 also shows the use of the negative particle *не* (not) in Russian, which denies the propositional content of the utterance and reduces the degree of imposition on the invitee. As a result, the addressee is given more freedom to refuse the invitation without damaging the speaker's face. Our Spanish participants formulated all invitations as a question in the affirmative way, whereas in Russian 85.9% of interrogative invitations addressed to the boss and 72.8% to a new colleague contain a negative particle *не* (not). In comparison, when inviting a close friend, Russian informants chose the negative formulation of the question 21.2% of the times.

Finally, it is essential to point out that in Spanish there is an invitation sub-strategy, absent in Russian, i.e. pseudo-conditional statements. Although Spaniards can employ it in all three communicative situations, its frequency is higher in invitations directed to the boss (S1: 2.5%; S2: 8.6%; S3: 11.9%). Unlike other sub-strategies, the core of the invitation is situated in the protasis, which allows the speaker to protect his/her own face and the invitee's face from undesirable intrusion (9):

- (9) *Buenas tardes, mis compañeros y yo salimos ahora de la oficina y hemos quedado en el bar de enfrente, se lo comento por si se quiere venir. (SP58\_S3)*  
(Good afternoon, my colleagues and I are leaving the office now and we are meeting at the bar across the street, I'm telling you in case you want to come.)

As shown by this example, the clause with *por si* (in case/if) does not condition the content of the main sentence, but it gives meaning to the apodosis. This fact differentiates pseudo-conditionals from logical conditionals, which also appear in our study as mitigating internal modifiers. Logical conditional clauses restrict the scope of the head act and usually appeal to the invitee's desire (10) or availability (11), offering an excuse for refusing the invitation.

- (10) *Oye tío, qué tal cómo te llamas?..... Pues vamos a ir a tomar algo si te quieres venir vente tío (SP123\_S2)*  
(Hey man, how are you? What's your name?... Well, we're going for a drink, if you want to come, come, man.)
- (11) *Добрый вечер, если у вас нет планов на вечер, то предлагаю пойти после работы с сотрудниками в бар (RU33\_S3)*  
(Good afternoon, if you don't have plans for the evening, I suggest going to the bar after work with employees.)

Conditional clauses are less frequent in our corpora than the use of verb tenses as hedges or the negation of propositional content. In both languages, they can appear in all three situations, although they are more commonly employed in

Spanish invitations addressed to a new colleague (S1: SP: 3.3%, RU: 4.4%; S2: SP: 9.4%, RU: 0%; S3: SP: 3.2%, RU: 2.2%).

Finally, there is another internal modifier that reveals sociocultural differences between Spanish and Russian and distinguishes the realization of invitations to a superior in these languages. We refer to the selection of register. Our Russian informants formulated 95.6% of the invitations directed at the boss using formal address form *Вы* (*V*-form), while in Spanish the formal register is observed in only 30.4% of the invitations.

Other sub-strategies have emerged more sporadically and do not exhibit substantial differences between the two languages.

#### 4.2. Analysis of politeness strategies in supportive moves

As an optional element, supportive moves are more frequent in Spanish corpus (73.5%) than in Russian (59.9%). In both languages, the most prevalent supportive move is providing information about the event, which helps the speaker to introduce the invitation head act (SP: 60.6%; RU: 37.6%), as shown in the next example:

- (12) *Мы сегодня идём в бар, хотите с нами? (RU129\_S2)*  
*(We're going to a bar today, do you want to come with us?)*

In addition to this unit, the informants in our study made use of supportive moves that produce a mitigating or enhancing politeness effect. According to the obtained results, supportive moves representing solidarity politeness strategies appeared in 20.8% of the total number of invitations in Russian and in 7.9% in Spanish. As for deference politeness strategies, they are also more common in Russian (15.2 %) than in Spanish (12.9 %).

Table 5 illustrates the distribution of supportive moves according to the group and communicative situation.

Table 5. Relative frequency of politeness strategies in supportive moves in each communicative situation and language

	S1		S2		S3	
	Spanish	Russian	Spanish	Russian	Spanish	Russian
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Solidarity politeness</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>30.5</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>13.2</b>
Insistences	1.7	7.1	2.3	0.9	-	1.1
Promising reward	0.8	5.3	0	12.7	1.1	1.1
Expressing understanding/interest	-	-	-	-	3.3	2.2
Emotional appeals	-	3.5	-	4.2	-	3.3
Subjective grounders	1.7	0.9	8.6	12.7	4.3	5.5
<b>Deference politeness</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>16.3</b>	<b>24.2</b>
Preparators	5.8	6.2	0.8	5.9	2.2	9.9
Objective grounders	1.7	1.8	4.7	1.7	2.2	4.4
Minimizers	1.7	-	2.3	-	4.3	-
Agreement-seeking expressions	4.1	4.4	0.8	3.4	1.1	3.3
Apologies	-	-	1.6	-	6.5	6.6

There are similar tendencies in the two groups: deference politeness strategies external to the head act are associated with the existence of a hierarchical relationship (SP: 16.3%, RU: 24.2%), while solidarity politeness strategies are more common in invitations addressed to a new colleague (SP: 10.9%; RU: 30.5%). It is crucial to mention that, when there is a symmetrical relationship, Russians give preference to solidarity supportive moves (S1: 16.8 %; S2: 30.5 %), while in invitations addressed to a superior, they choose to highlight deference (S3: 24.2%). In Spanish, the percentages do not vary so much, so it is difficult to identify correlations.

The qualitative analysis enabled us to identify two types of grounders which, following Bella's proposal (2019), are called *objective* and *subjective*. In the first case, the speaker provides rational reasons that legitimize the issuing of the invitation, as the following examples show:

- (13) *¡Hola! Oye, ¿te quieres venir a tomar algo cuando acabemos hoy? Es que los viernes solemos ir los de la oficina al bar de enfrente (SP38\_S2)*  
*(Hello! Listen, do you want to come for a drink when we finish today? The thing is that on Fridays we usually go to the bar across the street.)*
- (14) *«Имя начальника», сегодня был загруженный день, так что мы с коллегами идем в бар. Не хотите к нам присоединиться? (RU124\_S3)*  
*(“Boss's name”, today was a busy day, so my colleagues and I are going to the bar. Wouldn't you like to join us?)*

Subjective grounders underline the benefit for both interlocutors and generally aim to strengthen interpersonal relations. Hence, when issuing an invitation to a new colleague, informants in both groups seek to convey that he or she is a person they wish to get to know and bring into the group.

- (15) *Hola, ¿qué tal te estás adaptando? Algunos vamos a tomar algo en un rato. Si quieres vente y así nos conocemos todos un poco más. (SP33\_S2)*  
*(Hi, how are you settling in? Some of us are going for a drink in a while. If you want, come and we can get to know each other a little better.)*
- (16) *Не хочешь сходить с нами после работы в бар? Заодно поближе познакомимся со всеми. Будет весело (RU62\_S2)*  
*(Don't you want to come to the bar with us after work? We'll get to know each other. It'll be fun.)*

As can be seen in these examples, the use of subjective grounder shortens the distance and underlines the importance of common ground and is therefore considered an instrument of the solidarity politeness. Objective grounders, on the other hand, introduce a rational reason for inviting (13, 14) and thus minimize the possibility of the invitee feeling indebted (Bella 2019). In this way, they protect the addressee's face and are related to deference politeness.

In both groups, subjective grounders are more frequent in invitations to a new colleague (SP: 8.6%; RU: 12.7%). Objective grounders are less common in our corpora and do not exceed 5% in any communicative situation.

Among other solidarity politeness strategies, we emphasize the use of reward promises, expressions whereby the speaker stresses the benefits of accepting the invitation. Their use makes the invitation more attractive. This supportive move is more common in Russian, especially in invitations to a new colleague (12.7%) or a close friend (5.3%). There are two types of promises of reward: the speaker describes the atmosphere of the event (17) or refers to a joint activity (18). In both cases, the utterance is intensified, and the bonds of solidarity are strengthened.

(17) *Пойдем с нами, будет весело (RU11\_S2)*

*(Let's go with us, it'll be fun.)*

(18) *Ты свободна вечером? Пошли сегодня в кафе, отдохнем, поболтаем (RU75\_S1)*

*(Are you free tonight? Let's go to a cafe, we'll rest and chat.)*

In Spanish, this move appeared sporadically and has a similar pattern on both occasions.

Within the external modification with a mitigating function, our informants have resorted to preparators (19). It should be emphasized that in Spanish they are mainly used in contexts of greater familiarity (S1: 5.8%; S2: 0.8%; S3: 2.2%), whereas in Russian they can even be addressed to a superior (9.9%) or a less familiar person (5.9%).

Minimizers and agreement-seeking expressions appeared occasionally in our corpora, making it challenging to draw definitive conclusions about their use. Both mechanisms represent deference politeness strategies. In the case of minimizers, speakers may include expressions like "*Sin compromiso*" (No commitment), allowing the invitee to feel no obligation to attend the event. This mechanism is present only in Spanish. Agreement-seeking expressions, on the other hand, helps convey respect for the other's opinion, as the speaker tries to determine whether the proposed plan aligns with the addressee's interests and preferences.

## 5. Discussion

The analysis of invitations in Spanish and Russian has revealed some common tendencies, as well as distinct peculiarities in each language. When issuing an invitation, participants of both groups assess the degree of formality and closeness to their interlocutor, which determines the level of (in)directness of the utterance.

In both groups, impositives are more characteristic of invitations to a close friend. This result is in accordance with those obtained in other studies (Barros García 2010, Barros García & Terkourafi 2014, Fernández-García 2024, Larina 2009, Schelchkova 2013, Shorokhova in press, Vlasyan & Kozhukhova 2019) and further confirms the hypothesis that in both communicative cultures, the direct style is well tolerated and there is a right to reduce the freedom of the interlocutor. In this



respect, the imperative is one of the main sub-strategies of inviting a close friend, since, in these cultures, it does not represent a threat to the addressee's face, but it can be a way of shortening distance and strengthening interpersonal relations (Barros García 2010, Larina 2009, Ruiz de Zarobe 2004).

In Russian, a direct style reflects sincerity, which represents an important sociocultural value (Larina & Ozyumenko 2016, Wierzbicka 2002). According to Russian sociocultural norms, the speaker is expected to issue a sincere invitation which conveys the wish that the addressee accepts the invitation. Consequently, involvement and solidarity are achieved through the first-person plural imperative, which also makes clear the tendency of Russian culture towards *we*-orientation (Larina et al. 2017). In the Russian corpus, an inclusive orientation appeared not only in invitations whose addressee is a close friend, but also a new colleague.

In line with recent research, we observed the predominance of interrogative productions in the Spanish corpus, regardless of the characteristics of the interlocutor (Barros García & Terkourafi 2014, Fernández-García 2024, Liu 2023, Ruiz de Zarobe 2004, Shorokhova 2023). However, when inviting a close friend, Spaniards give preference to the most direct question, i.e. locution derivable, regarded as a sign of solidarity politeness (García 1999, 2008). In Russian, interrogative sub-strategies are more associated with the existence of more distance and/or power (Vlasyan & Kozhukhova 2019). It is worth noting that interrogative utterances are considered suitable for the realization of invitations and offers because they emphasize the conditional nature of this communicative act (Leech 2014) and reflect respect for the interlocutor's autonomy (Fernández-García 2024). For instance, in wish-questions, the focus shifts to the invitee and his/her wishes and needs. As a mitigating tactic, the interrogative expression of the invitation offers more freedom to the addressee, prevents his/her face from possible damage and shows the speaker's respect for the invitee's interests and opinion. Therefore, interrogative utterances could be used not only in situations where the speaker perceives the need to soften his/her words and mitigate possible negative social effects, but also in situations of interpersonal closeness and linguistic relaxation, in order to preserve the balance of faces.

When inviting someone lesser known or a person with a higher status, participants in both groups resort to some mitigating internal modifiers to stress the deference politeness. In both languages, the use of the conditional tense is common, which helps to raise the degree of formality and to convey a greater respect for the invitee's autonomy. In Russian, it is also possible to include the negative particle in wish-questions. Brown and Levinson (1987) describe this mitigating tool as a negative politeness strategy: by denying the propositional content of the invitation, the speaker transmits pessimism and thereby grants the addressee greater flexibility to decline the invitation without harming the speaker's face. The use of this attenuating tactic has been mentioned by Vlasyan and Kozhukhova (2019) who indicate that young Russians are more likely to use it, especially in requests and invitations.

In connection with the sub-strategies of invitation, we should also mention that invitations in Russian are traditionally related to the performative verb *пригласить* (to invite). In our study, its use is rather low, which may be due to the analyzed type of invitation being close to a proposal. As other studies reveal, performatives are more common in *locus*-invitations, i.e. in invitations to an event (Rossikhina & Ikatova 2020, Shorokhova 2023, Vlasyan & Kozhukhova 2019). This sub-strategy can also be used to raise the formality of the invitation (Vlasyan & Kozhukhova 2019), as our Russian informants did.

The analysis has facilitated the identification of a sub-strategy that may lead to a misunderstanding in a Spanish-Russian intercultural interaction, i.e. pseudo-conditional statements. As example 9 illustrates, it is a conventionally indirect formula in Spanish that allows protecting the addressee's face from an intrusion into his/her private life. Its use may also be justified by the attempt to safeguard the speaker's own face, since this sub-strategy minimizes the illocutionary force and leaves it up to the addressee to interpret this utterance as an invitation. When conveyed to a Russian interlocutor, the utterance could be interpreted as lacking the speaker's enthusiasm, sincerity and interest, or it would not be understood as an invitation (Larina et al. 2017).

In addition to the head act, politeness strategies may appear as supportive moves. When issuing an everyday invitation, informants in both groups prefer to provide a description of the event that usually precedes the invitation itself. This supportive move is neutral to politeness and prepares the addressee for the invitation head act. Among the supportive moves with an enhancing effect, we can highlight subjective grounders and promises of reward. The latter is particularly relevant for the issuing of invitations in Russian, since it emphasizes the importance of a joint activity and common interests, and thus the addressee perceives that the invitation is sincere. In this language it is common for promises of reward to be oriented towards both interlocutors, and they can also refer to the value of communication in Russian culture (Shorokhova in press). Likewise, as Zagidullina et al. (2023) point out, distrust is inherent to Russian speakers; therefore, they tend to include additional elements to better persuade the interlocutor.

It is worth noting that, compared to other studies focusing on *locus*-invitations (Liu 2023, Shorokhova 2023, Vlasyan & Kozhukhova 2019), the informants in our study made less frequent use of insistences. This fact can be explained by the nature of the analyzed invitation: by issuing a non-impositive invitation close to a proposal to have a coffee, speakers do not feel the need to include supportive moves to convince the invitee to accept it. In this communicative situation, politeness strategies of solidarity become more relevant in order to approach a new colleague, create an alliance and introduce him/her to the collective.

External deference politeness strategies are more common in invitations to the boss. Here, informants can attract the superior's attention by means of apology. On the other hand, both groups used preparators, a tactic that helps to ensure the addressee's availability prior to issuing the invitation. It is pertinent to point out that

both preparators and agreement-seeking questions are signs of respect for each other's opinion and autonomy and can therefore be conveyed to different interlocutors (Barros García & Terkourafi 2014).

## 6. Conclusions

Our study has aimed to identify the various sociocultural characteristics in the realization of the communicative act of inviting by Spanish and Russian speakers. To this end, we have analyzed invitation samples in contexts with different configurations of social distance and power. The obtained results indicate that, in both communicative cultures, the production of the invitation is susceptible to situational variation, which leads speakers to make use of different politeness strategies, highlighting deference or solidarity.

When faced with the situational factors of social distance and hierarchical relationship, similar tendencies can be observed in Spanish and Russian. In invitations to a higher-status person, deference politeness strategies are preferred in both languages, while solidarity politeness strategies are more common in invitations to a close friend. Moreover, to support the head act of invitation, Spaniards and Russians may resort to solidarity politeness strategies to shorten the distance, to demonstrate the benefit of a joint activity and to convey their interest in the invitee's participation.

Despite the existence of these common tendencies, there are certain cultural differences. In contexts of power equality, invitations in Russian reflect the orientation of Russian culture towards solidarity and involvement through an inclusive perspective, which differentiates the realization of the analyzed speech act between the two languages. The Spanish participants, by contrast, aim to maintain the face balance and therefore tend to prefer interrogative formulae, even in contexts of greater familiarity.

In conclusion, although Spanish and Russian communicative cultures are characterized as cultures with a tendency towards solidarity politeness, each language has its own culturally differentiated communicative patterns for issuing an invitation.

The results of this study contribute to a better understanding of the use of politeness in the speech act of inviting in Spanish and Russian and provide the linguistic patterns accepted in each of them. These data can help to design new teaching materials for the learning of these languages, considering sociocultural and contextual factors in order to develop communicative competence.

## Acknowledgements

The completion of this research paper would not have been possible without the help of Prof. Dr. Viktor M. Shaklein, RUDN University, and the Department of Russian Language and Teaching Methods, who assisted us with the data collection.

### CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Elena Shorokhova:** Conceptualisation, Investigation, Data analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Visualization; **Palma Peña-Jiménez:** Conceptualisation, Data analysis, Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing

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### Article history:

Received: 09 October 2024

Accepted: 25 March 2025

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