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Research Paper

Regulative Discourse for Pre-Schoolers: Should English Language Teachers Be Polite?

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Abstract

This study aims to contribute to the research literature on politeness in language teachers' requestive behaviour. More specifically, it adopts a multilingual approach to explore teachers' politeness strategies in the English for Young Learners (EYL) classroom, an underresearched instructional setting where regulative discourse tends to predominate. Participants are two pre-school teachers and two intact groups of 4/5-year-old children. 1,942 procedural and disciplinary directives in six video-recorded lessons are processed from a discourse-pragmatic perspective centred on directness, modifiers, and person deixis. The emerging syntactic and sequential design of regulative discourse seems to respond to factors like activity type and differing understandings of classroom power relations or deontic stances (Stevanovic, 2011). Results can serve as an awareness-raising exercise useful to draw attention to the need of strengthening practitioners' pragmatic sensitivity in teacher training.

Keywords: Politeness; Regulative Discourse; Teacher Directives; Requests; Early Foreign Language Learning; English for Young Learners (EYL).

1. Introduction

Lowering the age of compulsory English is a global trend in today's language education. While evidence on the linguistic gains of this trend is inconclusive (Rich, 2014), its benefits on children's motivation have been widely acknowledged (Murphy, 2014; Nikolov & Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2011). Since caring for students at the pre-school stage is not optional but indispensable, early childhood educators should be trained to become relational professionals (Warren, 2014), able to build warm, positive and trusting relationships with children. In the English for Young Learners (EYL) classroom, child care teaching is closely linked to teachers' expressions of politeness as these entail a twofold attention to learners' wants of approval and autonomy, namely, to what Brown and Levinson (1987) coined as positive and negative face needs. That is, in order to sustain children's favourable attitudes towards English, teachers are expected to carry out some relational face-work, defined by Locher (2004) as "the process of shaping relationships in interaction by taking face into consideration" (p. 322).

The presence or absence of polite expressions in classroom discourse and the amount of relational work any teacher is willing to invest are particularly noticeable in face-threatening speech acts. Such speech acts abound in teacher regulative discourse and belong to Searle's (1999) category of directives. In Christie's (1994, 2000) terms, teacher directives (i.e., commands, warnings, requests or questions) fulfil procedural or disciplinary purposes. Whereas procedural directives define the way students are asked to carry out specific activities, disciplinary directives demand students' attention and acceptable behaviour. Both regulate learners' physical or mental actions and, regardless of how central instructional sequences may appear, they would not be possible without procedural and disciplinary directives.

As "structures of control" in classroom discourse (Ervin-Tripp, 1982), teacher directives are not only a source of pragmatic input but may nurture or undermine rapport-building. A closer analysis of procedural and disciplinary registers, then, could further deepen our understanding on how power (i.e., control) and closeness (i.e., care) are co-



constructed in the specific domain of the EYL classroom. In spite of the above, the next literature review section will show how pre-school teachers' politeness strategies from a relational perspective has received less attention.

2. Literature Review

Previous research on the pragmalinguistic forms of regulative discourse has gone into three directions. A first strand of studies offers a descriptive account of teacher directives in EYL classrooms based in Singapore or Indonesia (Liu & Hong, 2009; Pujiastuti, 2013; Syathroth, 2017). Results underscore the weight of imperatives with percentages that are never inferior to 60%. This preference for directness is associated, first, with the role of teachers as "controllers" (Pujiastuti, 2013, p. 163) and, second, with a teacher-student relationship marked by "a general tendency of +power, +distance, and +imposition" (Liu & Hong, 2009, p. 10). However, as Mushin, Gardner and Gourlay (2019) claim, these analyses would leave unexplained why teachers use pragmalinguistic forms other than bold imperatives.

A more comprehensive approach to teacher directives is taken in the next line of enquiry we will examine. With an explicit focus on teachers' pragmatic awareness, Dalton-Puffer (2005, 2007), Dalton-Puffer and Nikula (2006) or Nikula (2002) compare instructional and regulative directives in Finnish and Austrian Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) secondary school settings. Unlike Liu and Hong (2009), these authors do not read teachers' unmitigated directives as a signal of imposition. Rather, the absence of indirectness and mitigation in requests for information is interpreted in the light of the pragmatic conventions of instructional discourse. In so doing, requests for information in the CLIL classroom are seen as free goods (Dalton-Puffer & Nikula, 2006). Furthermore, in Dalton-Puffer's (2005) words, "it is possible that pragmatic awareness in a concrete situation rests in the non-use of modifying elements rather than vice versa" (p. 1278). Directness is also presented as the result of these CLIL teachers being non-native speakers of English, as an effect of their personal communicative styles and, ultimately, as a reflection of their authority (Nikula, 2002).

Additionally, when indirectness and mitigation appear in the regulative discourse of Austrian CLIL teachers, they are attributed to: (i) the proximity between English and Austrian German sociopragmatic norms, (ii) students' age and proficiency level with young adult groups creating the conditions for increasing teachers' indirectness and mitigation (Dalton-Puffer & Nikula, 2006), (iii) rapport-building for preserving a positive classroom environment (Dalton-Puffer, 2005) and (iv) current educational discourses categorising open forms of student control as "undesirable and undemocratic" (Dalton-Puffer, 2005, p. 1287).

The third direction followed by research on regulative discourse features detailed micro-analyses of procedural instructions. The teacher's choice of pragmalinguistic forms in these studies appears to be sensitive to other dimensions, thus far unattended, like their responses to student non-compliance, the location of a given directive in the temporal structure of the lesson itself or their deontic stance. In instructional contexts, the term deontic stance (Stevanovic, 2011; Stevanovic & Svennevig, 2015) alludes to how teachers understand and enact their institutional authority in schooling. While all educators share the same deontic status, their way of displaying it, namely, their deontic stance *does* differ. Among the studies undertaken with these new dimensions in mind, two are particularly noteworthy. First, Mushin, Gardner and Gourlay's (2019) report focuses on procedural directives in Australian primary classrooms and interprets teacher declaratives as contingent on action type and on the source of authority being attributed either to the teacher or to the wider curriculum. Second, Stevanovic and Kuusisto's (2019) analysis of Finnish-speaking directives in children's musical lessons explains the range of pragmalinguistic forms appearing in teacher directives as responsive to students' cooperation, activity context or institutional priority.

Several conversation analysis (CA) studies have also dealt with classroom reprimands. The pragmalinguistic forms of teacher disciplinary directives go from the named address-pause "piercing" students' anonymity, reported by Macbeth (1991) in American high-schools, to Margutti's (2011) conditional-formatted explicit reproaches, collected in Italian-speaking secondary lessons. What we learn from these studies is that even disciplining requires learners' cooperation, and that explicit forms of reprimanding are dispreferred options, only articulated when the teacher's repeated requests for attention and/or for appropriate behaviour have previously failed.

By and large, then, findings from CA studies on regulative discourse are most valuable in three respects. First, they reposition procedural and disciplinary directives into the interactional sequences where they belong. Second, they problematise the very notions of teacher power and authority as the prime and sole factor accounting for directive pragmalinguistic forms. Third, they attend to the effects of classroom regulation on rapport-building (Nguyen, 2007), and

to the construction of teacher and/or student identities (He, 2000, 2004a, 2004b; Cekaite, 2012). Based on CA research pursuits, thus, the institutional power and authority assigned to the teacher by families and schools loses its condition of a stable trait in “the culture of the classroom order” (Payne & Hustler, 1980, p. 50). The teacher power is increasingly perceived as locally made (Mushin, Gardner & Gourlay, 2019; Stevanovic & Kuusisto, 2019) and, most remarkably, as frequently masked or dissimulated (Iedema, 1996; Manke, 1997; Margutti, 2011).

Taken together, the three aforementioned research lines on teacher directives (i.e., descriptive accounts in Asian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, discourse-pragmatic analyses of CLIL secondary lessons and the CA approach) agree in the face-threatening nature of regulative discourse. Nonetheless, this common assessment should not always lead to a narrow reading of Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory (1987), according to which teachers’ unmitigated directness would be imposing or rude by default. As a matter of fact, research on teacher directives in early childhood education has tended to focus on Japanese language socialisation studies (Burdelski, 2010, 2013; Kanagy, 1999), on identity construction in Chinese heritage language schools in the USA (He, 2000, 2004a, 2004b) or on the conveyance of teacher deontic and affective stances in Swedish or Finnish-speaking lessons (Cekaite, 2012; Stevanovic & Kuusisto, 2019). Ethnographic (Manke, 1997) or sociolinguistic analyses of teacher directives (Holmes, 1983; Iedema, 1996) have collected their data from American, British or New Zealand primary schools, where English is learnt as a first or as a second language. Moreover, other languages present in teacher regulative discourse are ignored, offering a partial picture of how politeness is enacted in EFL low immersion contexts –exceptions to this monolingual view include Martí and Portolés (2019) or Safont (2018). Thus, there seems to be a need to conduct empirical studies on teachers’ regulative discourse that address two main research gaps. An interactional approach put forward by Mercer and Gkonou (2020), particularly underexplored in pre-schools, especially during “‘carpet’ time; or noisy, busy classrooms with much mingling of students” (Gardner, 2019, p. 222) and a multilingual perspective in which, as suggested by Safont (2018), the request forms identified and analysed are not “only those ones produced in English” (p. 130).

3. Aims and Research Questions

The present paper looks into the pragmalinguistic forms of teacher regulative discourse from an interactional multilingual perspective. As shown above, this is an underresearched area of interest. The aim of this study, then, is twofold. First, understanding how pre-school teachers enact their deontic status through more or less direct and aggravated or mitigated forms of directives. Second, analysing the impact of their deontic stances on rapport-building. With these aims in mind, the following research questions are formulated:

RQ1: How do pragmalinguistic forms realising procedural directives affect teacher politeness styles and rapport-building in the EYL classroom?

RQ2: How do pragmalinguistic forms realising disciplinary directives affect teacher politeness styles and rapport-building in the EYL classroom?

4. Methodology

4.1. Context and Participants

Data come from two schools based in Castelló, the northern capital city of the Valencian Community, one of the bilingual regions in Spain with Catalan and Spanish as official languages. The selected schools are state-run and offer a Catalan-based program, where English is learnt, at the very least, as a third language.

Participants are two female teachers, none of whom are native-speakers of English. Of similar age (in their late-twenties) and teaching experience (less than five years), they differ in terms of proficiency level and education profile. The teacher in the first school (henceforth, TA) was trained in Primary Education with a minor in English; she is an intermediate user of this language with a B1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). In turn, the teacher in the second school (henceforth, TB) holds a double degree in Primary Education and English Philology and her proficiency is higher, with a C1 level.

Students are two intact classes of pre-schoolers whose age ranges from 4 to 5. While the first group (henceforth, GA) is made up of eleven students, six boys and five girls; the second (henceforth, GB) has twenty-three pupils, fourteen

boys and nine girls. Children in both groups belong to working and middle-income families, most of whom have Catalan or Spanish as their first language (L1), with a minority of Romanian and Arabic speakers.

4.2. Data Gathering and Processing

Six sessions, three from GA and three from GB, were video-recorded at three different times: November, March and May. Naturalistic classroom discourse was transcribed and coded independently by the two authors, who sought consensus on ambiguous cases under the supervision of a senior researcher. To guarantee anonymity, students' names were changed for pseudonyms.

1,942 regulative directives, 979 from the three lessons by TA and 963 from TB's sessions were analysed. Although frequency of pragmalinguistic forms is not self-explanatory (He, 2000; Mushin, Gardner & Gourlay, 2019), it might unveil which directive patterns recur throughout the academic year and can thus be considered features of each teacher's politeness strategies. Accordingly, two data-driven coding schemes were employed. The first typology on directive head acts is based on Iedema's (1996) and Liu and Hong's (2009) taxonomies. As seen in Table 1, this typology departs from the typical syntactic division into imperatives, declaratives and interrogatives. Instead, it adopts three main categories defined by the type of commanding conveyed: (i) explicit, including bold imperatives but also declaratives of obligation, (ii) dissimulated, where hints are joined by inclusive imperatives or declaratives; and, (iii) ambiguous, corresponding to interrogatives.

Table 1. *Typology of Head Acts in Teacher Directives (based on Iedema, 1996; Liu & Hong, 2009)*

TYPE	SUB-TYPE		Examples
EXPLICIT COMMANDING	Elliptical phrases		<i>Hands up!</i>
	Bold Imperative		<i>Do X!</i>
	Speaker-based	Want/Need	<i>I want/I need you to do X.</i>
	Hearer-oriented	Obligation	<i>You have to/must do X.</i>
DISSIMULATED COMMANDING		Permissive	<i>You can/You will do X.</i>
	Inclusive		<i>Let's do X!</i>
	<i>Going to do</i> instructions		<i>We are going to do X.</i>
AMBIGUOUS COMMANDING	Hint		<i>Someone is still talking.</i>
	Feasibility/ability		<i>Can you do X?</i>
	Willingness/intention		<i>Will you/ Would you/ Would you like to do X?</i>

The second typology is a slightly simplified version of Alcón, Safont and Martínez-Flor's (2005) taxonomy on request modifiers, with the addition of Sato's (2008) and Wichmann's (2004) insights on the use of "please" as a multifunctional linguistic device.

Table 2. *Typology of Modifiers in Teacher Directives (based on Alcón et al., 2005; Sato, 2008; Wichmann, 2004)*

TYPE	SUB-TYPE		Examples
INTERNAL MODIFICATION	Attention-getters (alerters)		<i>Come on! Do X.</i>
	Fillers (appealers)		<i>Do X, ok?</i>
	Preparators		<i>Are you ready? Do X.</i>
	Grounders	Reasons	<i>We need to learn this and this, so do X.</i>
Conditions/Threats		<i>If you don't do X, I will tell your parents.</i>	
EXTERNAL MODIFICATION	Disarmers	Cost-minimisers	<i>Do X. It's very easy.</i>
		Sweeteners	<i>You're such a good boy/girl! Do X.</i>
	Expanders		<i>Let's do X! [...] You have to do X [...] Do X!</i>
	Promises of reward		<i>If you do X, we will go to the playground.</i>
MULTIFUNCTIONAL MODIFICATION	Please	Appreciation tokens	<i>Do X! Thank you!</i>
		Manipulative or initial	<i>Please, do X!</i>
		Prescriptive or medial	<i>Can you, please, do X?</i>
		Contract-based or final	<i>Do X, please!</i>
		Elliptical directive	<i>Please! (with rising intonation)</i>

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. RQ1: Procedural Directives

In order to discover what the recurrent pragmalinguistic forms for realising procedural directives and their impact on teacher politeness styles and rapport-building are (RQ1), three pragmatic dimensions are considered: (i) degree of directness, (ii) use of modifiers, and (iii) choice of person deixis or “authorship” (Dalton-Puffer & Nikula, 2006, p. 245). As far as degree of directness is concerned (see Table 3), both teachers prefer what Iedema (1996) called explicit commanding.

Table 3. *Types of Commanding in Procedural Directives (based on Iedema, 1996; Liu & Hong, 2009)*

PROCEDURAL DIRECTIVES					
TYPE	SUB-TYPE	GROUP A		GROUP B	
		N	%	N	%
EXPLICIT COMMANDING	Elliptical phrases	115	20.6	146	33.2
	Bold Imperative	266	47.6	223	50.7
	Want/Need	11	2.0	6	1.4
	Obligation	38	6.8	12	2.7
	Permissive	9	1.6	2	0.4
	TOTAL	439	78.6	389	88.4
DISSIMULATED COMMANDING	Inclusive	26	4.6	10	2.3
	<i>Going to do</i> instructions	65	11.6	20	4.5
	Hint	8	1.4	6	1.4
	TOTAL	99	17.6	36	8.2
AMBIGUOUS COMMANDING	Feasibility/ability	16	2.9	14	3.2
	Willingness/intention	5	0.9	1	0.2
	TOTAL	21	3.8	15	3.4

78.6% of explicit commanding in GA rises up to 88.4% in GB. While TA employs more declaratives of the type “I want you to/You have to/You must do X”, TB favours the use of bold imperatives and elliptical phrases. In turn, dissimulated commanding in GA doubles the percentage of inclusive imperatives or inclusive declaratives in TB’s procedural directives. Lastly, percentages of ambiguous commanding –mostly “Can you” questions– are very similar in both groups. Does the prevalence of explicit commanding mean that these teachers neglect children’s face needs and, hence, are imposing or rude? Is TB more authoritarian than TA because she is more direct? Not necessarily. A closer look at the position and function of procedural directives reveals their pragmatic appropriateness and communicative effectiveness.

With verbs like “remember”, “listen and repeat”, or “tell me”, bold imperatives in GA and GB usually precede strings of questions to review the lesson vocabulary on colours, animals or food and fruit. Expressions such as “Look at...” are very useful in storytelling because they direct students’ attention to the description of characters. Verbs of movement are at the core of Total Physical Response (TPR) activities, which abound in songs like “Two little dicky birds” or in games where students have to bounce and pass a ball.

Moreover, TB’s use of conditionals, such as “if you’re wearing blue, stand up!”, turns the requested action (i.e., “stand up!”) into the means for children to show their lexical knowledge on colours. In becoming part and parcel of the instructional register, Liu and Hong’s (2009) interpretation of bold imperatives as “the most forceful form” (p. 8) seems hard to defend here. On the contrary, drawing a parallelism with initiation-response-feedback sequences in the CLIL secondary classroom (Dalton-Puffer & Nikula, 2006), in the context of the EYL classroom, bold imperatives should be seen as free goods, with a low imposition value. As Stevanovic and Kuusisto (2019) conclude, in regard to imperative directives in Finnish-speaking musical lessons, their nature is “neutrally instructive” (p. 11).

Similarly, elliptical phrases ask for actions students are already familiar with (Iedema, 1996). Most elliptical phrases in TB’s procedural directives (33.2% of her procedural discourse) simply result from nominating students to approach the teacher and participate in class. They can also serve as reminders of instructions recently given (Mushin,

Gardner, & Gourlay, 2019), as when TA reiterates her previous request “the papers in the basket and the scissors on the tray”, or corrects how students draw a teddy bear with elliptical phrases like “Irene not that way. That way, ok?”

Having established bold imperatives and elliptical phrases as unmarked or neutral polite behaviour, it is time to consider the extent to which directive head acts are further modulated by the addition of modifiers.

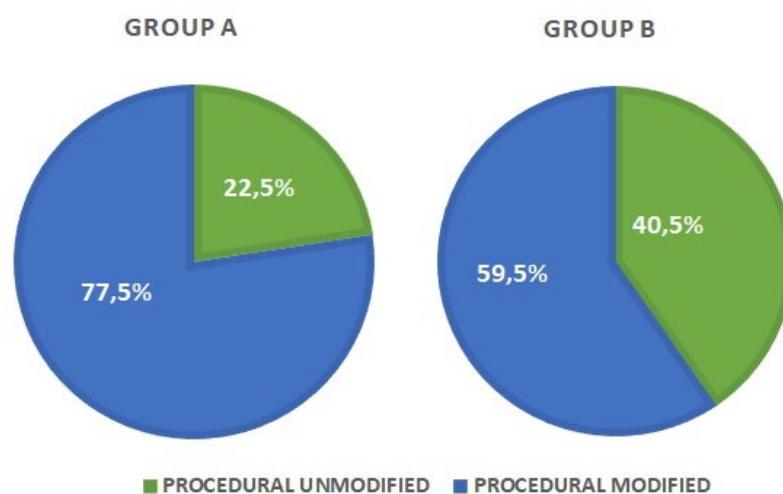


Figure 1. Degree of Modification in Procedural Directives

Figure 1 shows how the presence of unmodified directives is higher in TB’s (40.5%) than in TA’s procedural discourse (22.5%). The question is whether these modifiers serve to mitigate or to aggravate teachers’ procedural directives. In other words, which are the individual politeness styles emerging from our participants’ choice of modifiers? In order to answer these questions, Table 4 summarises the occurrence and type of modifiers used.

Table 4. *Modifiers in Procedural Directives* (based on Alcón et al., 2005; Sato, 2008; Wichmann, 2004)

PROCEDURAL DIRECTIVES		GROUP A		GROUP B		
TYPE	SUB-TYPE	N	%	N	%	
INTERNAL MODIFICATION	Alerters	61	20.2	23	11.7	
	Appealers	48	15.9	23	11.7	
	TOTAL	109	36.1	46	23.5	
	Preparators	8	2.6	17	8.7	
EXTERNAL MODIFICATION	Grounders	Reasons	41	13.6	40	20.4
		Threats	0	0	0	0
	Disarmers	Cost-minimisers	4	1.3	2	1.0
Sweeteners		0	0	0	0	
MULTI-FUNCTIONAL MODIFICATION	Please	Expanders	99	32.8	54	27.5
		Promises of reward	5	1.6	0	0
		Appreciation tokens	14	4.6	13	10.3
		TOTAL	171	56.6	126	64.3
		TOTAL	22	7.3	24	12.2
TOTAL		302	100	196	100	

With figures of 32.8% in GA and 27.5% in GB, expanders are the most frequently employed modifying strategy. In both teachers’ procedural discourse, this sub-type of modifiers seems to follow three patterns. First, they personalise general directives by adding students’ names (e.g., TA: “Today, I’ve got a surprise for you. Chan, chan, chan, close your eyes, close your eyes, close your eyes, Victoria, Carlos, Patricia, close your eyes”). Second, they specify general actions

(e.g., TB: “So now, come here; come to the front and line up, ok?”). Third, they simplify the format of the first directive in the interest of clarity (e.g., TB: “Abdul, please, can you catch the cat? Meow, meow, the cat, the cat”).

Reasons, a rarity in the CLIL secondary class (Dalton-Puffer, 2005), are widely displayed here. Many offer a rationale for new activities (TA: “The teddy bear is brown and we are going to colour this picture colour brown, ok?”). Others serve to move the agenda forward (TB: “Sit down, we are going to practise, sit down”). Interestingly, in GA, some of these grounders invoke classroom norms like turn-taking (TA: “It’s Empar’s turn”), the English-only policy (TA: “Irene, we’re in English class, we have to say it in English”) or a responsible use of materials (TA: “put, please, the papers here; we are going to recycle the papers, c’mon, hala –Spanish for come on–, the papers to the basket”). Borrowing Baumrind’s distinction into authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting (1967, 1989; reported by Goodwin, 2006, p. 538), none of our teachers could be defined as authoritarian. Their resort to logical explanations proves that they do not value obedience first but opt for a positive appeal to children’s logic.

Moving to the remaining modifiers, we agree with Goodwin and Cekaite (2013) or He (2000) that alerters (e.g., “ok” or “now” prefacing directives), appealers (“yes?” or “ok?”) and/or appreciation tokens (i.e., “thank you”) act more as discourse organisers than as polite markers. It is also doubtful whether “please” is always a mitigator because, in many instances, it “highlights rather than tones down the teacher’s authority” (Dalton-Puffer & Nikula, 2006, p. 255). Sometimes, the prosodic shape of directives is even more informative than the syntactic one. For example, the peremptory tone TA uses to hurry her pupils with the attention-getters “come on”, “vinga”, or “hala” (its Catalan and Spanish equivalents) is completely absent from her colleague’s alerters, which tend to be more neutral discourse macro-organisers such as “ok, now” or “so now”.

The main difference between both teachers’ procedural directives, though, has to do with their use of person deixis, a factor closely linked to face issues (Xi, Liu & Wang, 2016) and to identity construction (He, 2004a, 2004b). If we look at Table 3 again, TA is the one who selects more dissimulated forms of commanding like inclusive imperatives (i.e., “Let’s do X!”) or inclusive declaratives (i.e., “We are going to do X”). Still, the classical interpretation of “Let’s do X!” as a solidarity marker (Scollon & Scollon, 1981) does not resist closer examination. The most reiterated inclusive imperative, “Let’s see if you can remember”, stresses TA’s role as the permanently attentive evaluator of children’s performance. Her constant surveillance is also evident when she is about to play a song from the CD and warns: “I will listen to you, eh?” In parallel, many going-to-do instructions rest on we-exclusive-of-addresser forms. Inclusive declaratives like “we are going to write the NAME” actually mean “you, the students, will write your names on the worksheet”. TA’s attempts to mask her separateness from the students also fail when children are qualified as “boys and girls” (e.g., “Ok, boys and girls, put on the coat, the boots and we open the umbrella”). Extract 1 illustrates this shift from a formally inclusive “we” to a real distancing and imposing “I”, which upgrades TA’s display of authority or deontic stance (Stevanovic, 2011).

Extract 1:

TA: Samantha! *A vore* the name, Samantha
(let’s see)

Sn: [xxxx copy]

TA: now **you**, Samantha, write your name!

[16 turns later, in view of the girl’s delay in finishing the worksheet and writing her name]

TA: Samantha! **I** want the name! **I** want the name! come on!

write the name! write the name!

come on! *Però* finish! **We** are going to finish.

(but)

Oppositely, despite her lower percentages of inclusive imperatives and declaratives used (see Table 3), TB manages to project a warmer and friendlier persona. A careful choice of person deixis and the use of greetings and other friendly gestures allow her to create a relaxed classroom atmosphere. Children are given choices on what they prefer doing and, thus, both their positive and negative face needs are taken care of. This is particularly noticeable at different points of a memory game where GB students are nominated to catch a plastic coloured fish, to which a given animal flashcard has been previously stuck.

Extract 2:

- TB: so next one (.) Gonzalo
 [the T's nomination works because the boy stands up and approaches her]
 PLEASE (.) PLEASE (with an encouraging gesture)
 can you find the tiger for **us**?
- Sn: xxxxxxxx
 Gonz: lion?
- TB: no:: no, lion (.) tiger
 the lion is brown and the tiger is yellow and black
- Sn: tiger
 TB: yes
- [Gonzalo immediately catches the blue fish with the tiger flashcard attached. The T claps Gonzalo and the Ss with her]
- Sn: bravo
 TB: very good, Gonzalo!
- [The boy bows to the class]
 TB: ok
- [The T approves Gonzalo's bowing down with a smile]
 [...]
 TB: ok now NOW **we** want to catch please (gesture of doubt)
 Sn: cat cat cat
 TB: the cat? (T nods) yes?
 Ss: yes!, yes!, yes!
 TB: ok Emma **they** want **you** to catch the cat, please:
 [...]
 Bal: Balma (the girl knows that now is her turn to participate)
 TB: Balma::, hello Balma, how are you today? are you happy?
- [Balma nods]
 TB: yes?
 so (.) now which animal do you want to catch?
 the snake or the (:) mmm dog?
 Sn: the snake ::
 TB: snake? yes?
 so (.) please catch the snake
- [Balma catches a mistaken fish]
 Sn: DOG
 TB: oh my God! this is a dog (with pitiful intonation)
 Sn: DOG
 TB: sit down, please, sit down Balma, thank you very much

In sum, results linked to RQ1 point to three factors affecting the realisation of procedural directives. First, activity type may explain why requests for actions in TPR sequences are not imposing but neutral (Mushin, Gardner & Gourlay, 2019; Stevanovic & Kuusisto, 2019). Second, following Kasper's (2006) discursive pragmatics approach, the location of most modifiers reveals that their function in classroom interaction goes beyond that of politeness to become verbal activity boundary markers (Goodwin & Cekaite, 2013; He, 2000). Third, pragmlinguistic forms in procedural directives appear

to depend on how teachers understand their institutional authority, namely, on their deontic stance. The provision of reasons as modifiers situates TA's and TB's styles of control as authoritative, far from authoritarian modes of unjustified obedience (Goodwin, 2006). In turn, authorship of directives tells us more about what type of "interpersonal positioning" (Iedema, 1996, p. 84) is enacted here.

TA wavers between dissimulated commanding with "we" pronouns –see Extract 1– and "I" (the teacher) versus "you" (the pupils) instances, where assertion of traditional teacher roles and separateness from children are sanctioned. Instead, TB favours teaching moments –see Extract 2– when instruction is done without compromising rapport-building, that is, without sacrificing "immediacy" understood as physical and psychological closeness (Rodríguez, Plax & Kearney, 1996, p. 294). But politeness styles and forms of rapport can also be impacted by how teachers respond to students' non-compliance, a contextual factor to be tackled in the next section.

5.2. RQ2: Disciplinary Directives

The second research question (RQ2) focuses on the pragmalinguistic forms of disciplinary directives. An overview of the most recurrent head acts detailed in Table 5 confirms the weight of imperatives. As could be reasonably expected, Table 5 represents how the trend towards explicit commanding is accentuated in disciplinary directives, amounting to 91.8% in GA and to 97.6% in GB.

Table 5. *Types of Commanding in Disciplinary Directives* (based on Iedema, 1996; Liu & Hong, 2009)

DISCIPLINARY DIRECTIVES					
TYPE	SUB-TYPE	GROUP A		GROUP B	
		N	%	N	%
EXPLICIT COMMANDING	Elliptical phrases	56	38.1	114	69.6
	Bold Imperative	68	46.2	44	26.8
	Want/Need	0	0	0	0
	Obligation	6	4.1	2	1.2
	Permissive	5	3.4	0	0
	TOTAL		135	91.8	160
DISSIMULATED COMMANDING	Inclusive	1	0.7	2	1.2
	Going to do instructions	0	0	0	0
	Hint	10	6.8	2	1.2
	TOTAL	11	7.5	4	2.4
AMBIGUOUS COMMANDING	Feasibility/ability	1	0.7	0	0
	Willingness/intention	0	0	0	0
	TOTAL	1	0.7	0	0
TOTAL		147	100	164	100

Table 6 displays the use of modifiers in disciplinary directives, with 111 occurrences in GA versus only 33 employed by TB.

Table 6. *Modifiers in Disciplinary Directives* (based on Alcón et al., 2005; Sato, 2008; Wichmann, 2004)

DISCIPLINARY DIRECTIVES						
TYPE	SUB-TYPE	GROUP A		GROUP B		
		N	%	N	%	
INTERNAL MODIFICATION	Alerters	19	17.1	2	6.1	
	Appealers	7	6.3	2	6.1	
	TOTAL	26	23.4	4	12.2	
EXTERNAL MODIFICATION	Preparators	0	0	0	0	
	Grounders	Reasons	27	24.3	2	6.1
		Threats	6	5.4	0	0
	Disarmers	Cost-minimisers	0	0	0	0
		Sweeteners	0	0	0	0
	Expanders	36	32.4	14	42.3	
	Promises of reward	2	1.8	0	0	
	Appreciation tokens	4	3.6	2	6.1	
	TOTAL	75	67.6	18	54.5	

MULTI-FUNCTIONAL MODIFICATION	Please	Manipulative or initial	2	1.8	6	18.1
		Prescriptive or medial	1	0.9	0	0
		Contract-based or final	7	6.3	4	12.2
		Elliptical directive	0	0	1	3.0
	TOTAL		10	9	11	33.3
TOTAL		111	100	33	100	

Once again, the teacher whose disciplinary directives are more direct and less modified is not the one who cares less for the children's face needs. TB's preferred pragmalinguistic forms to deal with students' untoward behaviour are elliptical phrases (69.5%) and imperatives (26.8%). Elliptical phrases include onomatopoeias (e.g., "hey" or "oi, oi, oiiiiiiiiiii"), shushing, the expressions "silence" and "time over" with a gesture of break time or the song "now ♪put your hands on your head, put your hand on your ears, put your hands on your mouth♪", acted out by the students in a TPR fashion. Imperatives are mostly impersonal (e.g., "Don't shout like that!"). And in many occasions, the only difference between a disciplinary directive and a procedural one is intonation (e.g., "Listen to me!" with clapping hands).

Most importantly, what matters in TB's politeness style is not so much the presence but the absence of some disciplining forms. The named address-pause strategy (Macbeth, 1991) is hardly used. Obligation statements are also scant and refer to the conditions needed to carry out the activity at hand (e.g., "shhhh! It's story time and you must listen, ok?"). Conditional warnings that make patent some wrongdoing (Margutti, 2011) or enclosed moral lessons (He, 2000) are inexistent. TB also resorts to embodied directives, that is, to "tactile steering" (Cekaite, 2010, p. 11) but selectively and in coordination with talk.

Overall, TB is more tolerant with the amount of mischief acceptable in a class of 4/5-year-old children, keeps a positive affective stance that minimises their mistakes and refrains from hurting students' feelings. This avoidance of public reprimands is apparent in the way TB interacts with Adriano, a hyperactive boy who regularly interrupts her or tries to advance the teaching agenda. Extract 3 illustrates how Adriano's misconduct is read as excitement and how open accusations of cheating made by another boy, Pepe, are finally averted.

Extract 3:

TB: okay (.) now (.) another fruit
this one is ::

[the teacher flaps the flash-card with the fruit and Adriano sees it]

Adri: pear

TB: green, a green [pear

Adri: [pear

TB: pear, very good

[Adriano stands up and celebrates the correct answer with his fist raised]

Adri: yes (.) I do!

TB: Adriano (.) please (.) sit down

[Ss laughing]

TB: relax, sit down, relax (still smiling)
listen to me everybody

Pep: *no le veo la gracia a hacer trampas*
(I cannot see why cheating is so funny)

TB: look (.) pears

Pep: *siempre hace trampas Adriano*
(Adriano always cheats)

TB: Adriano is cheating, yes, he's cheating (with a smiley voice and playful tone)

Pep: ha mirado

- (he has looked)
- TB: yes, he's cheating (still teasing)
- Adri: ¿qué es eso?
(what's that?)
- TB: nooooooo, he is not cheating, he knows it!
now (.) listen (.) do you like pears?

Contrarily, TA's disciplinary directives are rather face-threatening in the following respects. Firstly, most elliptical phrases (38.1% of head acts) result from nominating unruly students by calling out loud their first names (e.g., "Samanthaaaaaaaaa"). Secondly, hints such as "I can't listen to Irene", "Timur is not working today" or "Hem de treballar quan hem de treballar" (Catalan for "one has to work when one has to work") emphasise students' academic differences and position some of them as disrespectful or lazy. Thirdly, expanders include obligation statements invoking rules that should govern classroom behaviour like: "Listen, first of all, you have to listen". Fourthly, while it is true that some imperatives are accompanied by "please" and "thank you" or by reasons justifying the requested actions (e.g., "Sit down properly. Si no, Timur no podrà veure" –Catalan for "otherwise Timur cannot see"), others verge on expressions of punishment (e.g., "Samantha, give me the teddy bear because you don't listen") or have some serious threats attached: "Tomás Te ficaràs ahí a soles" –Catalan for "you will go there on your own".

We are certainly before two different politeness styles. In the instruction-reproach continuum proposed by Margutti (2011), TB's disciplinary directives could be seen as unobtrusive, as if the objective of their brevity and neutrality were to save time for teaching the lesson contents. In contrast, TA's disciplinary directives would dangerously edge towards the accusation pole, as shown next:

Extract 4:

- TA: *OYE deixem de jugar JA amb els felt-tips*
(LISTEN! we stop playing with the felt-tips NOW)
o m'enfade de veritat
(or I'll get really angry)

Extract 5:

[Some children are asking about what the next activity will be]

- TA: *No vaig a dir-vos res*
(I am not going to answer you)
Espera, Tomás, a veure
(Hold on, Tomás, let's see)
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? (::)

[Everybody stops talking. Tense silence]

- Tomás! *jo he dit* let's go to the train?
(did I say)
he dit que ens n'anem ja?
(did I say that we're leaving?)
jo només he dit stand up (.) *mira* the boys and the girls in the classroom
(I only said) (look at)
(5.0) [Tomás sits down again]

ok (.) thank YOU

6. Conclusion

This study sets out to conduct a multilingual micro-analysis of directives in the EYL classroom that takes into account teachers' translingual practices in Catalan and Spanish. Findings of this comprehensive view of regulative discourse point to the relevance of teachers' individual politeness styles, an aspect largely ignored in most teacher training

programmes where both pragmatic awareness (Glaser, 2018) and classroom management strategies (Khanjani, Vahdany & Jafarigohar, 2017) are hardly promoted. Nobody doubts that practitioners' skills for maintaining classroom order are paramount in early childhood education. In contrast, the effects of the pragmalinguistic features of regulative discourse on the consecution of a loving pedagogy (Grimmer, 2021) has got relatively unnoticed in pre-school teachers' professional development. Not surprisingly, the recent application of positive psychology to Second Language Acquisition has increased the significance of teacher interpersonal communication behaviours. Still, this new line of research might have lost sight of the role played by teachers' politeness strategies in facilitating or impeding the materialisation of positive teacher interactional variables like those of clarity, closeness, confirmation or care. Nevertheless, to keep children motivated in foreign language learning –the main benefit of introducing English from the start of infant schooling–, classroom regulation should be enforced without neglecting children's positive and negative face needs.

That is why, despite being subject to many quantitative –only six lessons– and qualitative limitations (e.g., lack of data triangulation), this study puts teacher directives under the magnifying glass of discourse pragmatics. In having selected practitioners with two distinct proficiency levels and education profiles, some patterns in their choice of directives have been identified. They may lack representativeness but are worth noting and pursuing. In that sense, three are the tentative conclusions to be drawn from the described patterns. The first connects both pre-school teachers' preference for unmodified directness in issuing instructions with clarity, one of the five Cs positive teacher interpersonal factors studied by Derakhshan (2022). Given pre-schoolers' age and low English proficiency, ensuring clarity and comprehensibility may not respond to polite norms of indirectness and mitigation operating in conversational directives. Yet, it is in tune with the pedagogical focus of procedural discourse, whose ultimate aim is that children understand what to do, how to do it and why. Hence, in favouring bare imperatives or elliptical phrases, our pre-school teachers are not being forceful or rude. Rather, in avoiding the drawbacks of using long and confusing directives (Waring & Hruska, 2012), TA and TB may have diminished their pupils' cognitive burden when processing the instructions they are given. In essence, they can be seen as catering for students' negative face needs in terms of autonomy and non-imposition.

The second conclusion of the analysis of procedural directives has to do with our participants' distinct approach to person deixis. The fact that the higher frequency of inclusive imperatives and declaratives in TA's procedural register does not automatically result in more closeness or immediacy should alert us about the conventional interpretation of person pronouns as mitigating devices. The third insight afforded by focusing on the differing pragmalinguistic features of these two pre-school teachers' disciplinary directives is the extent to which managing children's misbehaviour can be made compatible with care teaching. Contrary to Extract 5 where we see TA exerting control in detriment of one of her students' desire to feel liked and appreciated, TB's disciplining sequences, including what she leaves unsaid, render a deontic stance much less confrontational, distancing and face-threatening. Possibly, TB's clear concern for children's positive face needs derives less from her higher proficiency level in English and more from the pragmatic sensitivity she displays and the great deal of relational face-work she undertakes (for more about the impact of affect and interpersonal intelligence on pragmatic ability and directive speech acts use, see Ghonsooly & Mazaheri, 2010; or Rahimi Domakani, Mirzaei & Zeraatpisheh, 2014). Actually, all the extracts from GB are good examples of teacher confirmation, namely, "the process by which teachers communicate students that they are valuable, significant individuals" (Ellis, 2004, p. 2). Comparing and contrasting them to the ones from GA, especially those where classroom regulation *does* endanger care of pre-schoolers' positive and negative face needs, can enhance teacher trainees' awareness and reflection on how crucial their individual style of politeness in rapport-building might be in their future practice.

Summing up, to the question posed in the title of this article, "Should English language teachers be polite?", the answer is yes. Because being polite with pre-schoolers does not only consist in delivering a set regulative discourse where standard polite forms like "please" or "thank you" can be displayed. Being polite with young learners of English means having the pragmatic ability and sensitivity to create the conditions for developing quality teacher-student relationships, which are nourished by the positive interactional principles of clarity, closeness, confirmation and care. Affective teaching is effective teaching (Arnold, 2019) because, at the end of the day, "we teach people, not languages" (Mercer & Gkonou, 2020, p. 172).

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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Appendix: Transcription Conventions

CAPS	Emphasis, signaled by pitch or volume
.	Falling intonation
?	Rising intonation
!	Exclamation talk
,	Comma indicates a level continuing intonation; suggesting non-finality
[]	Brackets indicate overlapping utterances
(.)	Period within parenthesis indicates micropause
(2.0)	Number within parentheses indicates pause of length in seconds
(xxx)	Unintelligible speech
<i>Italics</i>	Stretches in Spanish or Catalan
Ss	Students
Sn	Unknown Student
TA	Teacher in Group A
TB	Teacher in Group B



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