THE APPLICABILITY OF LINGUISTIC POLITENESS STUDIES TO TRANSLATION: A CASE STUDY

ROSA LORÉS SANZ
UNIVERSIDAD DE ZARAGOZA

1. INTRODUCTION: BROWN AND LEVINSON'S POLITENESS THEORY

The present paper takes some aspects of a more complex description in order to approach Politeness studies from a new angle: translation. The most relevant approaches to the study of politeness agree in considering it as a linguistic phenomenon in which the close relationship between language and society can be perceived. Thus, the expression of politeness has a double dimension which, on the one hand, entails linguistic meaning and, on the other, a social one, from which may be inferred a certain personal relationship between addresser and addressee, a relative status, and a certain degree of social formality, as well as a certain speaker attitude towards the hearer. All these aspects determine the close relationship between the linguistic expression of politeness and the cultural context within which such expression is used.

This cultural-relativistic stand somehow contradicts or, at least, partly questions, the universal character ascribed to linguistic politeness by one of the seminal theories in the field: the framework of Politeness theory devised by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson in their book *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Use* (1978, 1987).

This article will take as its framework this discussion, to which cross-cultural research has greatly contributed in an attempt to determine the extent to which the principles of politeness vary or coincide among languages or,

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rather, among cultures. As I see it, politeness theory and the discussion concerning what is universal and what is culturally-determined in politeness can benefit from contrastive studies in the field of translation, and translation can also profit from insights into the study of linguistic politeness.

Although Brown and Levinson's theory continues to attract criticism because of its claim to universality, it may be considered the most comprehensive politeness model so far. Gumperz states in his preface to the 1987 edition:

> In the years since it first appeared it has come to be accepted as the classic treatment on politeness in communication. As an integrative treatment of phenomena previously dealt with in a variety of disciplines it is now widely cited by linguists, psychologists and students of social interaction. A major reason for this interest is that politeness, as the authors define it, is basic to the production of social order, and a precondition of human cooperation, so that any theory which provides an understanding of this phenomenon at the same time goes to the foundations of human social life. (1987: xiii)

The point of departure for Brown and Levinson is "the extraordinary parallelism in the linguistic minutiae of the utterances with which persons choose to express themselves in quite unrelated languages and cultures" (1987: 55), and their objective is to set up a contrastive study to enable them to describe and account for such parallelism. To do so, their contrastive study is carried out on three very different languages: English, Tzeltal, (spoken in Chiapas, Mexico) and South Indian Tamil. Brown and Levinson state that the parallelisms found in these three languages as far as linguistic politeness is concerned enable them to posit the universality of politeness as a regulative principle in verbal exchanges.

Their methodological framework is based on the construction of a model person (MP), endowed with two special properties: 'rationality' and 'face' (1987: 58). 'Rationality' refers to the application of a specific way of reasoning which guarantees the ability to choose effective courses of action to achieve the intended effects (1987: 64). Derived from Goffman's model (1967), 'face' is a key concept which refers to the public self-image that every person wants to claim for him/herself (1987: 61).

It is generally uderstood that, in general, speakers tend to cooperate (and expect cooperation from others) in maintaining face in every verbal interaction, and this cooperative attitude is based on the assumption that both the speaker's and the hearer's face can easily be threatened. They assume that

both the awareness of each other's face and the social need to avoid loss of face are universal, and they prefer to define 'face' not as an arbitrary norm, acknowledged by all members of society, but as something whose protection is a shared need and a mutual interest.

Brown and Levinson conceive 'face' as consisting of two related aspects: positive and negative, the former understood as every individual's desire that his/her self-image be appreciated and approved of, and the latter as every individual's claim to freedom of action and freedom from imposition.

Face, in its positive and negative aspects, and as the speaker's and the hearer's face, can be threatened by certain acts which Brown and Levinson call Face Threatening Acts (FTAs), whose impact can be reduced by the use of certain politeness strategies.[1] In order to choose an appropriate politeness strategy to counteract the threat involved in an FTA, any model person has first to assess the danger that the realization of the FTA implies,[2] such assessment being calculated on the basis of three sociological variables: the social distance (D) between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H), the relative power (P) of S and H, and the absolute ranking of the imposition (R) in the given culture. The results of that calculation will guide the speaker in the selection of the most appropriate strategy to use in a given situation. (1987: 67-70). The following strategies are available: bald-on-record, positive politeness, off record, don't do the FTA.

As mentioned above, the criticisms of Brown and Levinson's theoretical proposal have been many and various: they tend to focus on four main problems:[3]

- the absence of context (both situational and cultural),
- the neglect of discourse,
- the rigidity of the politeness scale in relation to the three sociological variables (P, D and R),
- the universality of their ranking of negative politeness and off-record strategies.

To these might be added objections to the concept of face itself.

Many of the most common objections to Brown and Levinson's theoretical proposal come from scholars working within distant cultures from the Western one, like the Japanese and the Chinese (Mao, 1994; Matsumoto, 1989, et al.), but there are other voices raised within the so-called Western world (Blum-Kulka and Olshtein 1984; Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989; Sifianou 1992, et al.), who also help to show that cross-cultural studies are a way, not of refuting but, rather, of developing and improving valuable material such as Brown and Levinson's model.[4] Therefore, in spite of all the objections and criticisms of their work, which reveal the need to

revise some of their basic tenets, it is undeniable that their theory is still valid and continues to shed light on linguistic politeness.

It is my intention in this paper to gather evidence which may prove, firstly, that although the use of linguistic strategies to compensate for the threat of a Face Threatening Act (FTA) seems to be universal, the type of strategy used is not necessarily so and, secondly, that the study of translations of literary texts is a valid field of research for those who work in linguistic politeness. Some examples taken from the American play *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and its Spanish translation *La gata sobre el tejado de zinc caliente* will be commented on. It is also my purpose to show that Brown and Levinson's claim that "any rational agent will tend to choose the same genus of strategy under the same conditions" (1987: 71) does not hold when the cultural context varies, and this may be seen within the field of literary translation.[5]

2. THE APPLICATION OF POLITENESS THEORY TO THE STUDY OF LITERATURE

At the 1989 IAUPE Conference in Lausanne, Roger Sell declared that more and more linguists were coming to see entire processes of production and reception as specific to particular socio-cultural, situational and interactional circumstances. In his view, that trend towards contextualization, which could be traced from Speech Act Theory through Discourse Analysis to Pragmatics, may also serve as a rallying point for a different species of literary scholar, one who centres on the pragmatic and communicative aspect of literary texts. However, that trend does not fundamentally distinguish the communication between literary writers and their readers from any other type of language communication (Sell 1989). Thus, Literary Pragmatics has emerged as a discipline which draws on the contextualizing insights of both linguists and literary scholars and which sees the writing and reading of literary texts as interactive communication processes, inextricably linked with the particular socio-cultural contexts within which they take place.

Sell believes that the literary text, like any other instance of language, is an action performed in the real world. Therefore, in contradistinction to previous theories which placed the action within the limits of the literary text in which an implicit writer and an implicit reader take part, Literary Pragmaticists conceive the implicit writer and reader in the text as aspects of the real writer and the real reader who interact in a real world. According to Sell, if in everyday interaction speakers respect conversational turns, wish to

maintain their addressee's face and, in general, comply with what is called the Cooperative Principle, it would be most surprising if they were to experience a literary speech act in different terms (1985: 175).

Sell claims that no student of politeness can afford to overlook literary texts, and he offers a threefold reason for this (1989): a) in their mimesis of human interaction literary texts offer noteworthy portrayals of politeness at work (politeness *in* literary texts); b) the process of communication between authors and readers itself constitutes a field of interaction in which politeness considerations operate (politeness *of* literary texts); c) the politeness in literary texts and the politeness of literary texts lend themselves to study from a diachronic perspective.

Sell believes, then, that literature and all other human activities are linked through social interaction; just as there are changes in politeness so there are changes in literature or in other aspects of life. He illustrates his approach to the study of politeness in literary texts with an analysis of Chaucer's *The Miller's Tale* and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, a poem which offended the readers of its time and then became well accepted as a classic some years later; that is, it started out as an offensive act only to become a polite one.

Other scholars have also devoted their time to the application of Linguistic Politeness to the study of literature. Paul Simpson studies politeness in Ionesco's *The Lesson* and claims that his study is "a discursive-stylistic analysis [which] should open the way for wider discussion of the text as interaction on several levels [and] highlight the roles of writer and reader as conversationalists in real-time speech events" (1989: 172).

In 1989 Roger Brown and Albert Gilman set out to test the universality of Brown and Levinson's model by applying it to the study of four Shakespearean tragedies (*Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth* and *Othello*). In their view, the use of dramatic texts was justified because a) these provide the best information on colloquial speech, b) the psychological soliloquies in the tragedies provide the access to inner life that is necessary for a proper test of politeness theory, and c) the tragedies represent the full range of society in a period of high relevance to politeness theory (1989: 159).

Literary texts, then, seem to offer an appropriate field of study for pragmatic issues. Among them, dramatic texts understood, in Sell's terms, as both a mimesis of human interaction and as a process of communication between writer and reader, are, it would seem, particularly apt for the study of linguistic politeness. The present study will focus on the first of these aspects, that is, on what Sell calls politeness *in* literary texts.

3. AN APPLICATION OF POLITENESS THEORY TO TRANSLATION

3.1. PROPOSAL FOR A CONTRASTIVE STUDY

The application of politeness theory to literary texts may enrich both relevant disciplines: on the one hand, a vast field of research opens up for politeness theory; on the other, literary studies may gain insights from the application of a new perspective. Additionally, the incorporation of translation as a field of research for politeness studies provides further possibilities for the study of social interaction, and translation may also benefit from a new and different cross-cultural perspective.

Here it is my intention to show that the translation of literary works is a field of research for those working in linguistic politeness and, what is more, the practice of translation can also be illuminated by the confrontation of cultural differences in the linguistic expression of politeness. To illustrate these points I shall focus on the American play *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* by Tennessee Williams (1955), and its Spanish translation *La gata sobre el tejado de zinc caliente* by Ana Diosdado.

The aim of the study is to test, within the field of translation, the conclusions drawn by a certain number of researchers,[6] according to whom the assessment of the danger that the realization of an FTA involves, as well as the linguistic strategies that speakers use to compensate for such danger, are not universal, as Brown and Levinson postulate in their model, but vary across cultures. In accordance with this hypothesis, every translation, which may be defined as the adaptation of a text, created and modelled within a certain cultural framework, to a different cultural environment, will necessarily reflect alterations dictated by the different politeness strategies of the target culture, alterations which may help the translated text to comply with the expectations of a target reader, as distinct from the source reader.

In carrying out a textual analysis of both original and translation, a number of considerations were taken into account:

a) My starting point was Brown and Levinson's statement that "as Wx [Weight] increases, a rational agent would tend to choose to use the higher-numbered strategies . . . [They] serve best to minimize face risk" (1987: 83). It may be recalled here that Brown and Levinson distinguished five types of compensating politeness strategies, which, from most threatening to least threatening, are: 'bald-on-record', 'positive politeness', 'negative politeness', 'off-record' and 'do not do the FTA'.

b) I took W (Weight) to be the sum of the values ascribed to the sociological variables P (relative power), D (social distance), R (ranking of imposition) and A (affect). It should be pointed out that the existence of A as a sociological variable in its own right which may contribute to the assessment of the weight of an FTA was not recognised by Brown and Levinson in practical terms. However, I agree with Slugoski and Turnbull (1988) and Brown and Gilman (1989) that the more affectionate a relationship is, the higher numbered the strategies that tend to be used.

c) As I considered that reliable conclusions could not be drawn from the analysis of individual verbal exchanges, my final considerations were extracted from a global evaluation of the weight of FTAs, grouped according to the characters taking part in the verbal interactions. In this way, less adventurous conclusions might be inferred about the alterations that politeness strategies possibly suffer after a process of translation, as more data were handled at the time of isolating possible modifications in the values that the original author and the translator ascribed to the variables which make up W (P, D, R and A).

A textual analysis model was applied to the original version and to the translation. First, a selection of those FTAs, or rather MFTAs,[7] which varied in the Spanish version, was made in both texts and then the following steps were taken:

a) The MFTAs and the FTAs within MFTAs were labelled according to Brown and Levinson's typology.

b) A contrastive study of compensating strategies was made, signalling those which differed in both texts and stating the possible alterations that such divergences could bring about on the nature of the FTA or even of the MFTA.

c) The verbal exchanges were grouped according to the characters involved in them, in order to draw more reliable conclusions about the possible alterations in the values of the sociological variables which constitute W.

d) A global study of the alterations in the politeness strategies used in each text was made. This made it possible to reach some conclusions about the type of politeness strategies that most frequently undergo modification when translated.

3.2. THE APPLICATION OF POLITENESS THEORY TO TRANSLATION: A CASE STUDY

The contrastive study outlined above was carried out on the chosen text and on its Spanish translation. I focused on the types of MFTAs which were modified in some way, either because they now had a different nature and/or because some of the politeness strategies used to mitigate FTAs had been

transferred to the translated text as different strategies or had even been omitted. A great deal of data were extracted from the exchanges analysed, and are presented here in accordance with Brown and Levinson's typology. I shall concentrate on those alterations which took place in realizations of both positive and negative politeness strategies when transferred to the translated text.

A) By way of illustration, and in the field of positive politeness, the most common strategies to undergo alteration in the translation process were:

- seeking of agreement
- use of in-group identity markers
- use of slang.

Among these the positive politeness strategy which most frequently underwent modification was the use of in-group identity markers, including the use of terms of address and affectionate terms. These items were almost systematically suppressed, a course of action on the part of the translator which, in my opinion, was dictated by the need to avoid artificiality in the Spanish text.

Several examples will now be provided to illustrate the variations mentioned above:[8]

a) seek agreement:

MFTA (*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, p. 17, Act One)

MARGARET: **[1] [FTA+H accusation]**Well, I!—just remarked that!—one of th' no-neck monsters messed up m'lovely lace dress so I got t' cha-a-ange...

BRICK: **[2] [FTA-H asking for information]**Why d'ya call Gooper's kiddies no-neck monsters?

MARGARET: **[3] [FTA+H accusation and insult]** Because they've got no necks! Isn't that a good enough reason?

BRICK: **[4] [FTA-H asking for information]** Don't they have any necks?

MARGARET: **[5] [FTA+H insult]** None visible. Their fat little heads are set on their fat little bodies without a bit of connexion.

BRICK: **[6] [FTA+H disapproval]** That's too bad.

MARGARET: **[7] [FTA+H insult]** Yes, it's too bad because you can't wring their necks if they've got no necks to wring! Isn't that right, honey?

MFTA (*La gata sobre el tejado de zinc caliente*, p.11, Acto Primero)

MARGARET.- **[1] [FTA+H accusation]** Nada que... Bueno, sólo decía que uno de esos monstruos cuellicortos me estropeó el vestido, así que tuve que subir... ¡a cambiaaarme!

BRICK.- **[2] [FTA-H asking for information]** ¿Por qué les llamas monstruos cuellicortos a los críos de Gooper?

MARGARET.- **[3] [FTA+H accusation and insult]** Porque lo son. No tienen cuello. ¿No es suficiente motivo?

BRICK.- **[4] [FTA-H asking for information]** ¿No tienen cuello?

MARGARET.- **[5] [FTA+H insult]** Por lo menos no se les ve. Parece como si tuvieran una cabeza gorda directamente pegada a un cuerpecito gordo.

BRICK.- **[6] [FTA+H disapproval]** ¡Es terrible!

MARGARET.- **[7] [FTA+H insult]** Sí, sobre todo porque si no tienen cuello no hay manera de retorcérselo.

According to Brown and Levinson, 'seeking agreement' constitutes one of the most common positive politeness strategies used by speakers to claim common ground with hearers (1987: 103). Examples of this positive politeness mechanism are found in the MFTA above: the repetition of *it's too bad* and the use of *Isn't that right*. None of these mechanisms is reproduced in the Spanish text.

b) use of in-group identity markers:

MFTA (*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, p.21, Act One)

MARGARET: ... **[1] [FTA-S confession]** I sometimes suspect that Big Daddy harbours a little unconscious 'lech' fo' me...

BRICK: **[2] [FTA-H asking for information]** What makes you think that Big Daddy has a lech for you, Maggie?

MARGARET: **[3] [FTA-S confession]** Way he always drops his eyes down my body when I'm talkin' to him, drops his eyes to my boobs an' licks his old chops! Ha ha!

BRICK: **[4] [FTA+H criticism]** That kind of talk is disgusting.

MARGARET: **[5] [FTA+H insult]** Did anyone ever tell you that you' re an assaching Puritan, Brick?

MFTA (*La gata sobre el tejado de zinc caliente* p.15, Acto Primero)

MARGARET.- ... **[1] [FTA-S confession]** Incluso... a veces tengo la impresión de que inconscientemente a papá le gusto yo más de la cuenta.

BRICK.- **[2] [FTA-H asking for information]** ¿Qué te hace pensar que le gustas a papá más de la cuenta?

MARGARET.- **[3] [FTA-S confession]** El modo en que me recorre el cuerpo con los ojos cuando le estoy hablando, el modo en que me mira los pechos y se pasa la lengua por los labios. ¡Ja, ja!

BRICK.- **[4] [FTA+H criticism]** Tienes una manera de hablar repugnante.

MARGARET.- **[5] [FTA+H insult]** ¿No te han dicho nunca que eres un mojigato?

This example helps to illustrate the recurrent loss in the Spanish translation of in-group identity markers (terms of address, family names, nicknames etc.) which constitute a positive politeness strategy. As Brown and Levinson state, "by using any of the innumerable ways to convey in-group membership, S can implicitly claim the common ground with H that is carried by that definition of the group" (1987: 107). In the translated text, the proper names *Maggie* and *Brick,* used as compensating devices for their corresponding FTAs, are omitted, and no other strategies are used in their place.

c) use of slang:

The example used above is also helpful to illustrate the alteration in the use of slang as a positive politeness strategy. Brown and Levinson claim that, by referring to an object with a slang word, S may evoke all the shared associations and attitudes that both he and H have toward the object (1987: 111). In the Spanish text, words such as *boobs* and *old chops* are translated by the much more standard Spanish terms *pechos* and *labios,* which fail to trnasmit the close connection that Maggie intends to make between herself and her father-in-law.

B) The negative politeness strategies which most frequently suffer modification are the following:

- point-of-view distancing
- minimizing of threat
- use of 'hedges'
- use of 'honorifics'

- use of passive voice
- use of indirect speech acts

As a general rule, there was a tendency in the Spanish text to suppress negative politeness strategies or to replace them with positive politeness mechanisms. Some examples will now be provided.

a) point-of-view distancing:

MFTA (*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof,* p 25, Act One)

MARGARET: **[1] [FTA-H warning]** Well, sooner or later it's bound to soften you up. **[2] [FTA+H criticism]** It was just beginning to soften up Skipper when-**[3] [FTA+S excuse]** I'm sorry. I never could keep my fingers off a sore.

MFTA (*La gata sobre el tejado de zinc caliente,* p 19, Acto Primero)

MARGARET.- **[1] [FTA-H warning]** Bueno, eso le pasa a todo el mundo tarde o temprano. **[2] [FTA+H criticism]** El mismo Skipper empezaba ya a... **[3] [FTA+S excuse]**Perdona. Siempre acabo poniendo el dedo en la llaga...

FTA 2 is compensated for in the source text with a negative politeness strategy which Brown and Levinson call 'point-of-view distancing' and which helps to distance S from H or from the particular FTA (1987: 204). In this particular case the impersonal *It* is used to establish some distance between Skipper and the act of drinking, the 'it' to which Maggie refers and which constitutes an FTA. The Spanish version does not make use of this compensating device and the action is personalized and ascribed to Skipper.

b) minimize threat:

MFTA (*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof,* p 89, Act Three)

BRICK: ... **[1] [FTA-H offer]** Anyone else?

BIG MAMA [*sadly*] **[2] [FTA+H disapproval]**: No, son. I *wish* you wouldn't!

BRICK: I wish I didn't have to, Big Mama, **[3] [FTA-S excuse]** but I'm still waiting for that click in my head which makes it all smooth out!

BIG MAMA: **[4] [FTA+H accusation / FTA+H expression of violent emotions**] Aw, Brick, you—BREAK MY HEART!

MARGARET: **[5] [FTA-H order]** *Brick, go sit with Big Mama!*

BIG MAMA: **[6] [FTA+H complaint / FTA+ H expression of violent emotions]:** I just cain't *staiiiiiii-nnnnnd*—it...[*She sobs*]

MFTA (*La gata sobre el tejado de zinc caliente*, p 68, Acto Tercero)

BRICK.- ... **[1] [FTA-H offer]** ¿Alguien más quiere?

MAMÁ.- No, hijo. **[2] [FTA-H advice]** Y tú tampoco deberías beber más.

BRICK.- Ójala pudiera, mamá. **[3] [FTA-S excuse]** ¡Pero todavía no he ingerido la cantidad necesaria para conseguir la paz!

MAMÁ.- **[4] [FTA+H accusation / FTA+ H expression of violent emotions]** ¡Ay, Brick, qué cosas dices! ¡Si tú supieras el daño que me haces...!

MARGARET.- **[5] [FTA-H order]** Brick, ve a sentarte con tu madre.

MAMÁ.- ... **[6] [FTA+H disapproval]** ¡Cada vez que te veo llenar el vaso y...!

In the source text, in which the mother expresses both disapproval and violent emotions, FTA 6 is compensated for with a politeness strategy which Brown and Levinson call 'minimizing the imposition Rx' and which consists of indicating that Rx, the intrinsic seriousness of the imposition, is not in itself great (1987: 176). This strategy is generally carried out by means of terms such as *just*, as is the case in the example above. The Spanish version eliminates this strategy and compensates for the FTA of disapproval with a positive politeness device ('personal-centre switch' from S to H). The change in the type of strategy used transforms the nature of FTA 6 in the translated version, which fails to transmit the expression of violent emotions.

c) use of 'hedges':

MFTA (*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, p 32, Act One)

BIG MAMA: ... **[1] [FTA+H disapproval]** Whacha took off you' dress faw? **[2] [FTA-H compliment]** I thought that little lace dress was so sweet on yuh, honey.

MARGARET: **[3] [FTA-H complaint]** I thought it looked sweet on me, too, but one of m'cute little table-partners used it for a napkin so—I

MFTA (*La gata sobre el tejado de zinc caliente*, p 26, Acto Primero)

MAMA.- ... **[1] [FTA+H disapproval]** ¿Por qué te has quitado el vestido? **[2] [FTA-H compliment]** Te quedaba precioso.

MARGARET.- **[3] [FTA+H complaint]** Me quedaba precioso, pero uno de mis adorables vecinitos de mesa lo usó de servilleta, así que...

The mother carries out an FTA (2) which, in the source text, is compensated for with what Brown and Levinson call 'a quality hedge' (*I thought*), a negative politeness strategy derived from the desire not to coerce H (1987: 145). In the translated version the mother performs the same FTA, but this time it is expressed 'bald-on-record' (*Te quedaba precioso*).

d) use of honorifics:

MFTA (*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, p. 58, Act Two)

BIG DADDY:...- **[1] [FTA-H asking for information]** What are you doin' there now?

BRICK: **[2] [FTA-H dare]** Fresh'nin' up my drink.

BIG DADDY: **[3] [FTA+H disapproval]** Son, you know you got a real liquor problem?

BRICK: **[4] [FTA+S admission of guilt]** Yes, sir, yes, I know.

BIG DADDY: **[5] [FTA-H asking for information]** Is that why you quit sports-announcing, because of this liquor problem?

BRICK: **[6] [FTA+ S admission of guilt]** Yes, sir, yes, sir, I guess so.

BIG DADDY: **[7] [FTA+H disapproval]** Son, don't guess about it, it's too important.

BRICK [*vaguely*]: **[8] [FTA+ S admission of guilt]** Yes, sir.

MFTA (*La gata sobre el tejado de zinc caliente*, p. 47, Acto Segundo)

PAPÁ.-... **[1] [FTA+H criticism]** ¿Qué coño haces ahí?

BRICK.- **[2] [FTA-H dare]** Servirme otro whisky.

PAPÁ.- **[3] [FTA+H disapproval]** Oye, lo tuyo es muy serio, ¿eh?

BRICK.- **[4] [FTA+S admission of guilt]** Sí, supongo que sí.

PAPÁ.- : **[5] [FTA-H asking for information]** ¿Por eso dejaste el deporte, por la bebida?

BRICK.- **[6] [FTA+S admission of guilt]** Supongo que fue por eso, sí.

PAPÁ.- **[7] [FTA+H criticism]** Déjate de suponer, todo esto es importante.
BRICK.- **[8] [FTA+S admission of guilt]** Sí... Claro.

According to Brown and Levinson, honorifics constitute deference linguistic phenomena, that is, "direct grammatical encodings of relative social status between participants" (1987: 179). In the source text, honorifics are used, as negative politeness strategies which compensate for the realization of FTAs 4, 6 and 8, all of them of the same nature (admission of guilt). The translated version omits the use of honorifics and the FTAs are carried out without any compensating mechanisms.

e) use of passive voice:

MFTA (*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof,* p.42, Act One)
MARGARET: **[1] [FTA-H threat]** I can't stop myself! I'd go on telling you this in front of them all, if I had to!
BRICK: **[2] [FTA-H order]** Little girl! Go on, go on, will you? Do what I told you, call them!
MARGARET: **[3] [FTA-H threat]** Because it's got to be told and **[4] [FTA+H accusation]** you, you!- you never let me!

MFTA (*La gata sobre el tejado de zinc caliente,* p.33, Acto Primero)
MARGARET.- **[1] [FTA-H threat]** ¡No me pienso callar! ¡Todos! ¡Seguiré hablando delante de todos si hace falta!
BRICK.- **[2] [FTA-H order]**¡Anda, nena, corre...!¡Corre y diles que suban!
MARGARET.- **[3] [FTA-H threat]** ¡Porque tengo que decirlo y **[4] [FTA+O accusation]** tú... tú nunca me dejas!

The American text displays an FTA characterized as 'threat' (FTA 3) which is compensated for with the use of the passive voice (*It's got to be told*). The use of the passive voice is a negative politeness strategy considered by Brown and Levinson as a way of avoiding reference to persons involved in FTAs, as is the case of the speaker in the example above (1987: 194). The Spanish version, however, includes no such compensating device and the speaker realizes the FTA without any redressive strategy.

f) use of indirect speech acts:

MFTA (*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof,* p.42, Act One)
BRICK:**[1] [FTA-H threat]** Maggie, you want me to hit you with this crutch? Don't you know I could kill you with this crutch?

MARGARET: **[2] [FTA-H dare]** Good Lord, man, d'you think I'd care if you did?

MFTA (*La gata sobre el tejado de zinc caliente,* p.33, Acto Primero)
BRICK.- : **[1] [FTA-H threat]** Maggie, ¡podría matarte con esta muleta!
MARGARET.- **[2] [FTA-H dare]** ¡Pues adelante, hombre! ¿Supones que me importaría?

FTA 1 is compensated for in the source text by the use of indirect speech acts (*you want me...?; Don't you know...?*). In Brown and Levinson's view, indirect speech acts are certainly "the most significant form of conventional indirectness," as they allow the speaker to solve the tension between two opposing forces: the wish to allow H a way out and the wish to perform the FTA (1987: 132). Indirect speech acts constitute, therefore, a negative politeness strategy. The Spanish version avoids such redressive strategy and the speaker goes on record.

As was indicated above, these examples illustrate some of the most significant changes between the ST and the TT as far as the type of linguistic politeness strategy is concerned. However, some further alterations were found in the corpus analysed, as the following graphs and tables will show.[9]

Fig. 1: **No. of FTAs that undergo alteration in terms of the type of strategy used**

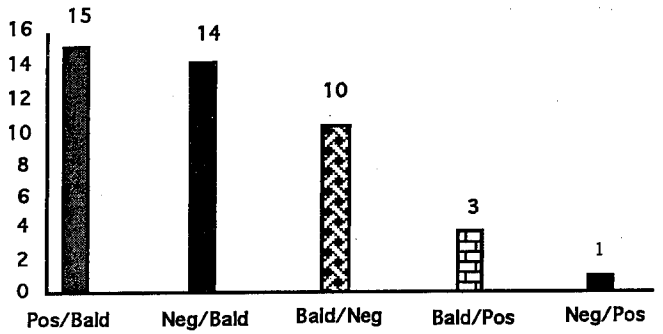


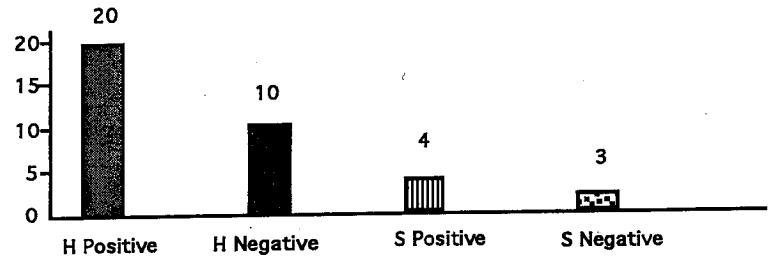
Table 1

Typology of MFTAs	Total number	Percentages
Accusation	8	21.6%
Confession	4	10.8%
Order	3	8.1%
Excuse	3	8.1%
Disapproval	2	5.4%
Reprimand	2	5.4%
Threat	2	5.4%
Bad news	2	5.4%
Dangerous topics	2	5.4%
Insult	2	5.4%
Complaint	2	5.4%
Warning	1	2.7%
Offer	1	2.7%
Request	1	2.7%
Asking for information	1	2.7%
Dare	1	2.7%
Total number of MFTAs:	37	

With respect to MFTAs, Table 1 shows the types, total number and percentages of MFTAs most frequently altered.

Finally, Figure 2 organizes the MFTAs modified in the translated text according to the perceived threat to the positive / negative face of the speaker / hearer.

Figure 2: **MFTAs modified according to the type of face threatened**



Total number of MFTAs modified: 37
Total number of MFTAs that threaten H (hearer) and are modified: 30 (81,08%)
Total number of MFTAs that threaten S (speaker) and are modified: 7 (18,91%)

4. CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the study briefly outlined above was successful in the sense that it once again called into question Brown and Levinson's postulate of the universality of the type of linguistic strategy used to compensate for FTAs. As shown in our study of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *La gata sobre el tejado de zinc caliente*, evidence was found that the translator adapted and modified the original text presumably in an attempt to comply with the expectations of a different type of audience as far as linguistic politeness was concerned. However, it must be pointed out that, although the variation was found in the type of strategy used, the translator could always have resorted to an alternative compensating strategy within the frame of Brown and Levinson's theory, which means that their claim to universality is still valid with regard to the use (not the type) of politeness strategies.

Some more specific findings were made with regard to other basic aspects of Brown and Levinson's theory. In particular, the summative formula devised by them for the assessment of the weight or seriousness of an FTA was brought into question. According to Brown and Levinson, the

weight of an FTA is the sum of the values attached to the three sociological variables (Wx = D (S,H) + P (H,S) + Rx). In accordance with their proposal, different values attached to the variables would give rise to a different assessment of W and, consequently, to a search for suitable compensating strategies. Even though a new sociological variable (Affect) was incorporated into the formula, it was found that in most FTAs, perhaps because of the cultural proximity of the American and Spanish cultures—Western cultures—it was difficult to ascribe different values to P, D, and A in the original and the translated version, and that only R—the most culture-dependent variable—could, ultimately, account for discrepancies found in the value of W, and for the use of different strategies in both the original and the translation. This may lead us to conclude that the addition of the variable A does not eliminate the dissatisfaction that the formula devised by Brown and Levinson arouses, and that further research should be done into the factors which influence the weight of an FTA, a fact which was somehow recognised by the authors in their 1987 critical revision of their model, though they did not act on their suggestion:

> In our view, P, D, and R can be seen to subsume most of the culturally specific social determinants of FTA expression, but we must concede that there may be a residue of other factors which are not captured within the P, D and R dimensions. (1987: 16)

On the other hand, the fact that I have had to resort to R to explain the writer's and the translator's different assessments of W, may call into question Brown and Levinson's proposal of a hierarchy in the use of politeness strategies. That is to say, the fact that the type of linguistic strategy used in the two texts is different should not necessarily imply that the value attached to W is also different, or that different values have been assigned to the variables that constitute W. On the contrary, it might be argued that, under the same conditions (identical values ascribed to the sociological variables in both texts), the writer and the translator lead their characters to use different compensating linguistic strategies, in an attempt to comply with the expectations and demands of the different types of reader, in different cultural backgrounds. If this hypothesis were true, the universality of a hierarchy of politeness strategies would also be called into question.

All in all, what the contrastive analysis clearly shows is that the translation of literary texts is a very fruitful field of study for politeness theory and also that the study of translation, both in theory and in practice, could benefit from the insights that this approach involves.

NOTES

1. Brown and Levinson include and devise a whole, though not exhaustive, typology of FTAs, according to whether they threaten the positive/negative face of the speaker/hearer. Orders, suggestions, offers, promises, compliments, complaints, excuses, apologies, among others, are considered FTAs.

2. Brown and Levinson make use of the term 'weight' (to refer to the threat involved in an FTA).

3. See Vázquez (1995).

4. For future research on cross-cultural analysis of linguistic politeness see also Escandell (1995), Fraser (1990), Garcés Conejos (1991, 1995), Haverkate (1990, 1991), Hickey (1991), Márquez (1997), Tannen (1984), Thomas (1995), Werzbicka (1985), Wood and Kroger (1991), among others.

5. The contrastive study which will be outlined here is only part of a more complex study for which a wider corpus of analysis, which included three more American plays and their translation into Spanish, was used.

6. See Blum-Kulka and Olshtein (1984), Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989), Wierzbicka (1985, 1991), Matsumoto (1989), Sifianou (1992), and Mao (1994) among others. I have underlined those examples of politeness strategies that are commented on in this paper.

7. For the present study, and as a unit of analysis, I used the MFTA (Macro Face Threatening Act), which has a discoursal structure, instead of the FTA, which has a sentence structure. Thus, I was following Garcés' proposal (1991), which was based on Van Dijk's concept of Macro-Speech Act.

8. In each example, the FTAs are numbered, and information is provided about their nature and whether they threaten the positive (+) or negative (-) face of either speaker (S) or hearer (H).

9. The binomials in the graph refer to the strategy used in the original version and the strategy used in the Spanish translation.

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