ON THE POLITE USE OF VAMOS IN PENINSULAR SPANISH

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1. Introduction¹

A growing interest in discourse markers² has given rise to a number of studies on languages as diverse as English (Edmondson 1981; Östman 1981; Schourup 1982; Erman 1987; Schiffrin 1987; Brinton 1990; Fraser 1990; inter alia), Japanese (Onodera 1994), Spanish (Cortés 1991; Briz 1993; Schwenter 1996; Portolés 1998; inter alia), Hebrew (Maschler 1994, 1997), and many others. These studies analyze a variety of functions served by discourse markers in natural conversations.

This paper examines the use of the deverbal marker vamos ‘well’ (literally, ‘we go’) in utterances that require mitigation (Fraser 1980) in Peninsular Spanish. The purpose is to establish systematic contexts of the use of vamos within discourse. To achieve this, natural conversations have been used. Let us first compare the canonical (1a) and the non-canonical (1b) meanings of vamos.

(1a) Vamos a la playa esta tarde.
'We are going to the beach this afternoon.'

(1b) Es que yo venía a reservarlo, vamos, y me interesa cuánto me podía salir.
'Well, I was coming to reserve it, well, and I am interested in how much it could cost me.'

(1a) and (1b) differ with regard to the function vamos serves in the utterance. (1a) represents the canonical/referential use of vamos, which is constrained syntactically by the remaining constituents of the sentence. In particular, its use is obligatory for the understanding of the utterance. In contrast, in (1b) vamos is used as an interpersonal

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² Discourse markers are also called connectors (see van Dijk 1977; Ducrot et al. 1980; Roulet et al. 1985; inter alia) and operators (see Ducrot 1983).

³ It should be noted that, without more context, the meaning of vamos is ambiguous, as it could also mean ‘let us go’, however, with a rising intonation and marked with an exclamation mark.
discourse marker which encodes the speaker’s (S) polite attitude towards the hearer or addressee (H). The S tries to mitigate the imposition his/her coming, wanting to make a reservation, and asking for the price could cause on the H. The use of the marker does not add anything to the propositional meaning of the sentence, but encodes S’s desire to establish a polite relationship between S and H in conversation. His/her (S’s) search for H’s approval and cooperation seems to address Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) politeness strategies.

2. Theoretical background and arguments

First, it is proposed in this paper that *vamos*, used non-canonically, functions as an interpersonal discourse marker. Schiffrin (1987: 40-41) defines discourse markers as "members of a functional class of verbal (and non-verbal) devices which provide contextual coordinates for ongoing talk." Recent studies also indicate that discourse markers, besides helping us “understand the nature of the links between sentences and among constituents”, mark "the degree of involvement of the speaker in the act of communication" (Vincent and Sankoff 1992: 215-216). Sankoff et al. (1997: 195) propose five properties that characterize discourse markers: they are (1) free constructions syntactically, as they “relate to discourse rather than to syntax or semantics”, (2) irrelevant for the propositional content of the sentence, (3) bleached out semantically as compared to their source constructions, (4) phonologically reduced, (5) "articulated as part of smoothly flowing speech production" (op. cit. 197). Except for the phonological reduction of discourse markers, the marker examined in this paper shows all these properties.

Second, following Maschler (1994) who refers to all linguistic expressions that facilitate the negotiation of interpersonal closeness vs. distance between participants as interpersonal markers, *vamos* can be considered an interpersonal marker. It involves "various elements which include a morpheme referring to the addressee" (Maschler 1994: 341). In fact, *vamos* includes the H morphologically by the first-person plural (we)

4 In addition to what Maschler suggests with regard to interpersonal markers, it is argued here that the distance created by this marker is used metaphorically to express consideration towards the H in certain contexts. The S and the H are intended to move together in the same direction, but it is the metacommunicative movement away from the content of the utterance which produces the effect of distancing or closeness between interlocutors. With regard to the latter, in the case of the use of discourse markers, there is an overlap of positive and negative politeness strategies, as discussed below.

Third, in contrast to Beinhauer (1985), it is argued here that the use of *vamos* is not

4 Beinhauer (1985) provides various examples of *vaya* (third-person singular subjunctive form of *ir* ‘to’) which, in contrast to *vamos*, dissociates with the H and distances him/her from the S, producing an expression of S’s irritation and/or irony.

5 Here, the concept of metaphor represents a cognitive dimension which, in the synchronic perspective, is able to capture the abstract notion of politeness encoded linguistically. However, it is metonymy which permits context-dependent interpretations of the S’s polite attitude.
motivated by S's inability to express himself/herself\(^6\) or by S’s need to clarify, reformulate, repeat, etc. (see Fuentes 1998), but rather constitutes a strategy the S employs to reduce the imposition of a speech act, and to establish a rapport between the S and the H. Beinhauer (1985), Cortés (1991), and Fuentes (1998) put more emphasis on the propositional content and the S’s role in the expression of a coherent utterance rather than on the S’s motivation to influence the H in a certain manner. Here, the H-oriented\(^7\) nature of the marker is considered to be crucial for ‘claiming common ground or sharing wants’ for the purposes of the interaction between the S and the H. In fact, \(vamos\) functions as a polite marker by invoking Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) negative and positive politeness strategies. That is, by producing distance to mitigate an imposition of an utterance, the S uses \(vamos\) as a negative politeness strategy, but by putting the H at the same level, \(vamos\) functions as a positive politeness strategy.

In the present work, \(vamos\) is considered a polite marker that responds to the concept of linguistic politeness. Linguistic politeness manifests itself in the linguistic encoding of the interpersonal distance (either increasing or decreasing) between the S and the H with the purpose of (a) showing the recognition of social conventions or (b) modifying the force of impositive speech acts. The focus in the present paper is on the second possibility, which emphasizes the strategic, volitional, and optional aspect of the linguistic encoding of politeness. Thus, it is proposed here that \(vamos\) addresses the concept of linguistic politeness. By the use of this marker, the S creates an interpersonal distance from the content of the utterance, and, at the same time, closeness with the interlocutor, thereby maintaining H’s face. The negotiation of interpersonal distance is a reflection of the linguistic distance, associated with the domain of the conceptual distance, which gives rise to the implicature of politeness in certain contexts.

Finally, it is argued that \(vamos\) has been grammaticalized from a deverbal construction (\(vamos\ ‘we go’) into a discourse marker (\(vamos\ ‘well’) in contexts of mitigation (cf. Traugott 1995b, 1996). In particular, the referential meaning of \(vamos\) as a marker of politeness is mostly 'bleached out' and its non-canonical meaning (politeness) can only be inferred in specific contexts, leading to the conclusion that the marker in question has undergone or is undergoing a process of grammaticalization. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine the diachronic development of the marker.

Here, grammaticalization is considered a synchronic functional extension (cf. Levinson 1983; Chodorowska-Pilch 1998) of certain constructions into other communicative uses (here, politeness) in specific contexts. The crucial factor in this process is the context which permits reinterpretation of a construction, leading to a polysemic use of a given linguistic construction. In addition, following Hopper and Traugott (1993: 86), the problem-solving aspect of grammaticalization refers to “the search for ways to regulate communication and negotiate speaker-hearer interaction.” The grammaticalization of politeness is motivated pragmatically, with the principal force being the concept of metonymy, allowing one to explain the association of distance from the content of an utterance with the interpersonal distance in impositive contexts. The end

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\(^6\) Beinhauer (1985) seems to be the only one who proposes such use of \(vamos\) (cf. Cortés 1991; Fuentes 1993, 1998).

\(^7\) Compare the H-oriented nature of Leech’s (1983) Tact Maxim.
result of this association may be viewed as a metaphor (cf. Schwenter and Traugott 1995), but it is metonymy that motivates a polysemic use of certain constructions in specific contexts.

Moreover, two related phenomena are characteristic of grammaticalization and linguistic encoding of politeness; pragmatic strengthening and subjectification (cf. Hopper and Traugott 1993). Pragmatic strengthening, realized by the expression of S’s attitude, is developed through the conventionalization of the inference of politeness (cf. Grice 1975). Subjectification (cf. Traugott 1995a) involves the encoding of S’s attitude through the non-canonical use of *vamos*, which is motivated by the observance of politeness principles.

3. Conversational mitigation

Before proceeding with the analysis of the functions of *vamos* and the contexts of its occurrence, it is important to introduce the notion of mitigation. Conversational mitigation is defined by Fraser (1980) as "the modification of a speech act: The reduction of certain unwelcome effects which a speech act has on the hearer." One of the functions of mitigation, according to Fraser (1980: 342), is to "ease the blow of bad news", which applies to problematic situations. He also concludes that "mitigation entails politeness", and it occurs "only if the speaker is polite" (Fraser 1980: 344). This relation of entailment between mitigation and politeness implies that when S uses mitigation markers he/she does it as a strategy to convey politeness towards H.

4. Data

The analysis in this paper is based on data gathered in two travel agencies near Madrid in Spain in the summer of 1994. Recordings of interactions between travel agents and clients were made during a one month period. Only the travel agents were aware that their conversations with clients were recorded. The customers were random people coming to make hotel reservations, to book flights, to buy train tickets, or to inquire about organized trips for the summer. The agents were only told that the purpose of the recordings was to analyze the use of language in natural interactions.

5. Polite uses of *vamos*

Consider example (2):

(2) A: 

Porque claro. [a] A lo mejor, me dicen ahora que sí y en veinte días que no ¿me entiendes? Por eso nos obligan a hacer la reserva directamente. 

[b] Pero, *vamos*, en hacer la reserva, o sea, tú me tienes que dejar un

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For the purpose of this paper, the following notations have been introduced; A: agent, C: client, ...: noticeable pause or break in rhythm without falling intonation, [:] part irrelevant for the analysis, [a], [b], etc.: letters marking crucial places for the analysis.
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The three instances of voyamos in (2) are by no means haphazard. First, they co-occur with three instances of ¿me entiendes? which signal a problematic situation for the agent. Second, the occurrence of voyamos exhibits certain patterns; i.e. the use of voyamos in (2)[b] and (2)[c] (preceded by pero) appears to be motivated by the necessity of mitigation. The agent strategically employs voyamos before introducing the issue of the client's leaving a deposit. Requiring money represents an awkward situation for the S. He, then, brackets the impolite content, with voyamos and ¿me entiendes? on either side, attempting to mitigate its force and thus protect the H's 'negative face'. At the same time, the S appeals to H's positive face, by explicitly including the H in the interaction. This can be illustrated as in (2'):

(2') [b] Pero M(voyamos) { IS + E } M(¿me entiendes?)
[c] Pero M(voyamos) { SG } M (¿me entiendes?) M (voyamos)IS(-p)

According to the proposed patterns in (2'), in (b) the S mitigates the impolite statement (IS) whose force is also reduced by the following explanation (E). In (2c), a suggestive statement (SG) is mitigated and later its propositional force reduced (-p) to a smaller amount of required deposit. With regard to the last use of voyamos in (2)[c], the agent self-

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9 SPJUN 1894A: 38 is an example of my notation to locate recorded material; SP: Spain, JUN 1894: the date of the recording, A: the side of the cassette, 38: the place on the cassette.

10 See Chodorowska (1997) for a detailed analysis of ¿me entiendes? In problematic situations.

11 I have also found ¿me entiendes? co-occurring with o sea, however, its function differs from that of voyamos. O sea does not focus on the H, but rather on the propositional content of an utterance.

12 For a classification of impolite speech acts see Chodorowska-Pilch (1998). Briefly, nine types are found, whose classification is based on two levels of representation: The sentence-level and the utterance-level. They are as follows: Direct question (DQ), indirect question (IQ), impolite statement (IS), request (R), indirect request (IR), suggestion (SG), explanation (E), offer (OF), and promise (PR).
corrects his previous statement to mitigate the imposition of the utterance\textsuperscript{13}. By introducing \textit{vamos} in the Wackernagel (sentence second) position (see Campbell 1991: 292), the agent also metaphorically invites the client to share the upcoming experience, which is characteristic of all instances of \textit{vamos} due to the inclusive ‘we’. This brings about an inference of friendliness between the interlocutors, which invokes ‘positive politeness’. Thus, \textit{vamos}, in Brown and Levinson’s (1978) framework, would be a strategy employed in both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ politeness.

In Cortés’s (1991) data, there are two attested aspects of self-correction by the S. One is identified as \textit{rectificativa} ‘rectifying’ and the other as \textit{atenuativa} ‘attenuating’. The latter is relevant for the use of \textit{vamos}\textsuperscript{14} in (2)[c], where the S reduces the issue of the propositional content. However, it needs to be noted that examples presented by Cortés (1991: 78–79) do not represent situations which require mitigation with relation to the H, but simply appear to correct information not precisely determined previously.

In (3) \textit{vamos} mitigates a suggestive statement.

\begin{equation}
\text{(3) A } \text{Pero, vamos, yo el que te recomendaría sería el que más te... Algunos son [ ] pesetas, pero te cubre si tienes que volver antes. Puedes volver antes [ ]}
\end{equation}

‘But, \textit{well}, the one I would recommend for you would be the one that you most... Some cost [ ] pesetas, but it covers you if you have to return before. You can return before [’]

The use of \textit{vamos} in (3) resembles the first use of the discourse marker in (2)[c]. In both cases, this marker of mitigation introduces a suggestive statement which could infringe upon the H’s freedom to choose, even though the agent has been asked to provide information\textsuperscript{15}. Therefore, the S metaphorically invites the H (through \textit{vamos}) to consider the S’s best suggestion, whose force is attenuated by the use of the Conditional (\textit{recomendaría}). The entire utterance can be glossed as follows: \textit{Pero M (vamos) \{ SG + E. In contrast to (2)[c], the S in (3) does not use other discourse markers to bound the impositive content. Instead, a simple explanation (E) follows the suggestion, which seems to reduce even further the imposition on the H, by expressing conditions which benefit the H. Such use of discourse markers and other linguistic mechanisms indicate that mitigation strategies are applied according to the illocutionary force of utterances. Whereas example (2) represents a statement requiring a deposit, example (3) is simply a suggestion. Thus the more impositive a speech act, the more mitigating strategies are introduced in order to reduce the impositive force.

In example (4), the S appears to attenuate ‘the blow of bad news’ for the H.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Fuentes (1998) provides numerous examples of \textit{vamos} used similarly for reasons of clarification.
\item \textsuperscript{14} This type of \textit{vamos}, according to Cortés (1991: 78), alternates with \textit{bueno} ‘well, OK’ and \textit{o sea} ‘that is to say’.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Encoding of politeness in suggestions does not have to be based on threatening H’s face. Recently, Hernández (1999: 42) has argued that the reason for being polite in Spanish colloquial conversation is “the necessity of keeping balance between interactants’ faces, i.e. between their respective wishes of \textit{autonomy} and \textit{affiliation}.”
\end{itemize}
(4) A  
[a] Hombre, sí. Si nos estás dando dos días, tres días. Es lo que suelen tardar. O sea que, vamos, no están tardando tampoco mucho, [b] pero, vamos, hay que esperar contestación de los hoteles. Claro, no depende de mí. Yo... hacerte te lo hago en el momento, pero luego la contestación de ellos ¿eh?

SPJUN794B:154

'[a] Well, yes. You are giving us two days, three days. This is what it takes. That is to say that, well, it doesn't take that much, [b] but, well, you need to wait for the answer from the hotels. Of course, it doesn't depend on me. I can do it instantly, but later (we need) their answer OK?'

In (4), a client insists on making a reservation for a hotel room on the same day. The agent, first, seems to negate the client's pessimistic assumptions, using the 'refutational sí' (cf. Schwenter 1997). Second, he attempts to involve the client by providing details of the reservation process. Thus, in [a], he mitigates the time of waiting and, in [b], the need to wait for the answer which would confirm availability of the hotel rooms. The utterance may be illustrated as in:

(4') [a] IS + E+ M + E, [b] pero + M + IS + E.

Examples of mitigation, used by different clients, are presented in (5) to (8):

(5) C  
Oye, una pregunta, vamos, a lo mejor no tiene mayor importancia.

'Stand, one question, well, perhaps it doesn't have much importance.'

SPJUN2894A:7

(6) C  
De todas formas, hay una cosa que como vamos a ir, vamos, iríamos nosotros y otra pareja más ¿sabes? Si no te importa pues nos lo puedes poner y ya se lo consulto con ellos y en el caso que diríamos que sí, pues me dejas la tarjeta y consultariamos el horario.

SPJUN1894B:199

'Anyway, since we are going to go, well, we would go and another couple, you know? If you don't mind, you can write it for us and then I (will) consult with them and in case we decide to go, so you leave me your card and we would consult the schedule.'

(7) C  
Pero yo quería más bien lo quería más bien cerca de playa y éste, vamos, no sé cómo está.

SPJUN1894A:335

'But I rather wanted I rather wanted it near the beach and this one, well, I don't know how it is.'

(8) C  
El cuatro es el que mejor nos vendría, pero vamos.

SPJUN1894B:137

'The fourth is the one that would suit us the best, but well.'

If one considers examples (5-8), it is instructive to analyze the apparent motivation behind the mitigating vamos. In (5), a man mitigates his intention to ask a question. He tries to reduce the imposition his question might cause on the agent. Vamos is used strategically to downgrade his question for the H’s sake; i.e. to make it sound not particularly important.
In (6), another client withdraws her previous statement which could cause pressure on the agent, changing the Present into the Conditional of ir, which makes the statement more tentative. In addition, she uses a respectful lexical expression (si no te importa ‘if you don’t mind’) and a modal verb (poder); all to convey her deferential disposition towards the H. In (7), yet another client expresses his wish with regard to the proximity of the beach from the hotel. When an agent shows him an unfamiliar hotel, the client manifests his doubt about it, employing vamos which appears to invite the agent to resolve the object of the client’s confusion. The first part of the utterance indicates his disappointment, as he realizes that this is not what he wanted. Vamos serves as a strategy to reverse at least part of the S’s imposition on the H, and to give the H an opportunity to clarify the situation. In (8), a client announces his wish regarding the preferred date of the departure. However, he immediately lets the agent know that his wish is dependent upon the agent, by using vamos at the end of the utterance.

It is clear from examples (2-8) that vamos may be used as a marker of mitigation by both agents and clients. Thus, in general, it may be considered a marker of S’s polite attitude towards H in problematic situations, as it appeals to the concept of linguistic politeness. Nonetheless, this is not the only function vamos may perform in a discourse; its use can be established in specific contexts16. As Fuentes (1998: 190) indicates, “vamos looks like an entity which is in the full process of extension of its functions.”17

6. Patterns of mitigation with vamos

In the analysis, some utterances have already been glossed in order to show similarities and differences among them. Let us consider all the examples involving the mitigating use of vamos in the patterns below:

(1b′) impositive statement (IS) → mitigating marker (M) → continuation (IS) + indirect question (IQ)  
(IS → M → IS + IQ)

(2′) [b] Pero → M → stating the requirement (IS) + explanation (E)  
(Pero → M → IS + E)
[c] Pero → M → suggestive statement (SG) → ... → M → reduction of the statement IS(-p)  
(Pero → M → SG → ... → M → IS(-p))

(3′) Pero → M → suggestion (SG) + explanation (E)  
(Pero → M → SG + E)

(4′) [a] presentation of the problem (IS) + explanation (E) → M → explanation (E)  
(IS + E → M → E)
[b] pero → M → presentation of the problem (IS) + justifying explanation (E)  
(pero → M → IS + E)

(5′) announcement of an impositive speech act (IS) → M → explanation minimizing the imposition (E)  
(IS → M → E)

(6′) direct statement (IS) → M → tentative statement (IS) + clarification (E)  
(IS → M → E)

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16 For other functions of vamos in conversations see Cortés (1991) and Fuentes (1998).

17 The literal quote is: “Vamos parece una unidad que está en pleno proceso de extensión de sus funciones...”
(7') expression of a wish (IS) → M → statement of a doubt (IS)  
(8') expression of preference (IS) → pero → M 

The individual mitigation patterns, involving *vamos*, come down to three general patterns, as in (i) to (iii):

(i)  

(ii)  

(iii)  

In the first type, (i), the marker is placed after *pero* in the second position of a sentence - Wackernagel position - (as in 2b, 2c, 3, and 4b).18 The marker introduces problematic situations (2b or 4b) and suggestions (2c or 3). The illocutionary force of these utterances seems to be so strong that the S feels impelled to provide explanations (2b, 3, 4b) or a reduction of the statement (2c) to further attenuate the imposition on the H. He/she may even resort to the employment of another discourse marker (*¿me entiendes?*, in 2b and 2c).

In the second type, (ii), the marker *vamos* is placed in the middle of an utterance (1b, 2c, 4a, 5, 6, 7). Also, it is clear that *vamos* functions as a metacommunicative marker which conveys S’s search for H’s cooperation in impositive speech acts. In some cases, the marker is preceded by an impositive statement (1b, 5, 6, 7) or by an impositive statement and explanation (4a), and in other cases, by a suggestion (2c). Furthermore, the marker can be followed by an interrupted impositive statement (7), an interrupted tentative statement with a clarification (6), a statement introducing an indirect question (1b), reduction of the statement (2c), or by an explanation (4a, 5). Considering the nature of utterances, the medial type of the mitigation produced by *vamos* is also used in less impositive (also, less problematic for the S) utterances than the Wackernagel type.

In the third type, (iii), the marker occurs in the final position of an utterance. In this kind of utterance little or no mitigation is required since there is not much imposition. In fact, the marker *vamos* is mostly employed to emphasize a friendly relationship between interlocutors.

It is interesting to note that *vamos*, used as a politeness marker, does not occur initially. On the one hand, this avoids the overlap with its canonical meaning, and, on the other hand, indicates that mitigation does not take place prior to production of an utterance. There are, however, examples of the initial use of *vamos* which serve other functions in conversation (cf. Cortés 1991).

In brief, the mitigating *vamos* has been found to attenuate the expression of utterances in specific contexts. The marker occurs in contexts of impositive statements (IS), suggestions (SG), explanations (E) and indirect questions (IQ). The marker expresses the S’s attitude towards the propositional content and the H. In result, the discourse marker may convey the implicature of the S’s deferential disposition towards the addressee.

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18 Also, Beinhauer (1985: 415) indicates that “*pero, vamos* has a certain conciliatory (or accommodating) tone” in declarations unpleasant for the interlocutor.
7. Grammaticalization of politeness through *vamos*

The non-canonical use of *vamos* in Spanish seems to correspond to a process of grammaticalization of politeness in specific speech acts, with the deverbal construction grammaticalized into an interpersonal discourse marker of S's polite attitude towards H (cf. Traugott 1995b, 1996). In contrast to nominal constructions (e.g. in Traugott 1995b; Schwenter and Traugott 1995), which can only attenuate the illocutionary force of a speech act (e.g. *o sea* in Schwenter 1996), the marker *vamos* may encode interpersonal relation between S and H, by referring to the presence of the interlocutor in an interaction. One argument in favour of grammaticalization may be the encoding of S's subjective attitude and thus an increase in pragmatic function (cf. Traugott 1995a). Comparing the use of this construction in its canonical and non-canonical (politeness) meanings, one clearly notes the loss (*vamos*) of the referential meaning of this construction in place of the expression of S attitude in utterances with attenuated force.

The origin of the linguistic encoding of interpersonal distance through discourse markers rests on a context-induced process (metonymy) which, from the synchronic point of view, may be considered as a metaphor (cf. Sweetser 1990; Heine et al. 1991; Schwenter and Traugott 1995; and Traugott 1997). Bybee et al. (1994: 296) observe that "metaphor is only possible in the very early stages" of grammaticalization. Although they do not consider metonymy to be a more appropriate manner of explaining change or extension in language, they argue that context is the most important factor among the mechanisms of change (op. cit. 297).

As is shown in this paper, the meaning of politeness conveyed by *vamos* may only arise in specific impositive contexts. Thus it is the metonymy which seems to have given rise to the process of grammaticalization of these constructions as markers of interpersonal distance. However, the metaphor of distance appears to be a more accessible manner of explaining the abstract concept of politeness.

8. Conclusion

The analysis shows evidence of the use of *vamos* as a marker of mitigation of the impositive force of utterances. The occurrence of this marker is consistent with Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness strategies, as its use mitigates the unwelcome force of an utterance and, at the same time, addresses the H’s positive face. In this paper, the marker is seen to draw on the linguistic encoding of politeness. Its function can only be determined pragmatically in a given context in relation to the participants. Three patterns of use of the marker have been established: 1) sentence-final, 2) sentence-medial, and 3) Wackernagel position (cf. Campbell 1991: 292). This specific position of *vamos* and the loss of its referential meaning in situations of mitigation seem to indicate the process of grammaticalization. These patterns confirm that utterances which require 'softening' cannot be mitigated prior to production. The construction is not used as a discourse marker to encode politeness in the sentence-initial position, because its use could overlap with the referential meaning of the expression.

Further research on interpersonal markers should address related phenomena. First, future studies of other languages should establish analogous markers which may be
considered grammaticalized linguistic forms to manifest politeness towards the H. Second, the correlation among the various interpersonal discourse markers for a given language (e.g., ¿me entiendes? and vamos) should be investigated in detail, so that a possible distribution of the use of these markers can be determined. Finally, a diachronic study, if possible, should be carried out, showing the development of the non-canonical meaning of politeness of this deverbal construction.

Future research will show whether the proposals put forward in this paper concerning the use of vamos (and also of other similar markers) find support in a wider corpus.

References


