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TÍTULO: Gender, culture and digital communication: A contrastive study of women's
reaction to men's conversational starters on Tinder

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Abstract

In the last few years, and particularly after the situation with COVID-19, the line which separates our "real" physical lives and our digital lives is growing narrower. Love, sex and dating are no exception. According to Tinder statistics, the generalized lock-down situation resulted in an increase of Tinder matches and on the amount of time spent talking to them. In online, inasmuch as in face-to-face interaction, it is men who often approach women and they do so using a variety of different conversational openers. The purpose of this master's dissertation is to discover what conversational openers (out of the eight studied) are most likely to generate positive responses from women in English and Spanish. In order to evaluate the level of effectiveness of each of the opening lines, a questionnaire was created which consisted of the conversational openers shaped as discourse completion tests. The sample of answers was constituted by 84 answers in Spanish and 51 in English and they were analyzed according to attitude, Conversation Analysis theories, and Herbert's Taxonomy of Compliment responses (1986). The results from this study show that women preferred greetings over any other conversational starter, even if intellectual compliments and questions for information were generally positively perceived. Moreover, Spanish speakers seemed to be more fond of intently humorous conversational openers (despite their sexual references) than English speakers. However, further studies are needed in order to reach truly statistically relevant conclusions.

Abstract (en español)

En los últimos años, y particularmente a raíz del confinamiento obligado por la pandemia del COVID-19, la línea que separa la vida "real" y la digital es cada vez más estrecha, esto se aplica a todas las facetas de nuestra sociedad, lo cual incluye las relaciones interpersonales. Según las estadísticas de Tinder, el confinamiento supuso un aumento de los "matches" en Tinder, así como la longitud media de las conversaciones. En este tipo de aplicaciones, al igual que en la interacción cara a cara, son los hombres heterosexuales los que suelen iniciar conversación y lo hacen utilizando diversas formas de abrir conversación. El propósito de este trabajo de fin de máster consiste en descubrir qué formas de abrir conversación (de los ocho estudiados) tienen más probabilidades de generar respuestas positivas en inglés y español. Para evaluar el nivel de eficacia de cada una de las formas de abrir conversación, se creó un cuestionario que incluía las formas de abrir conversación para que las encuestadas reaccionaran a ellas como lo harían a través de la aplicación. La muestra que se recogió estaba constituida por 84 respuestas en español y 51 en inglés y fueron analizadas según la emoción que transmitían, las teorías de análisis conversacional y la taxonomía de respuestas a cumplidos de Herbert (1986). Los resultados de este estudio muestran que las mujeres prefieren los saludos a cualquier otra forma de iniciar conversación, aunque los cumplidos intelectuales y las preguntas para obtener información también son generalmente percibidos positivamente. Además, las mujeres hispanohablantes reaccionaban más positivamente ante las formas de iniciar conversación de carácter humorístico (a pesar de sus referencias sexuales) que las anglófonas. Sin embargo, estudios más exhaustivos son necesarios para determinar si los resultados de esta investigación son verdaderamente significativos estadísticamente.

Resumen

La sociedad actual se rige por la necesidad de intercambiar información, tanto de forma física (conversaciones cara a cara) como virtualmente (a través de *Skype*, *Facetime*, *Facebook*, *WhatsApp*, etc.). De hecho, esta puede tratarse de una etapa clave para la evolución de las interacciones humanas pues los medios tradicionales de comunicación, a saber, conversaciones cara a cara o llamadas telefónicas, están siendo, paulatinamente sustituidos por otros medios de comunicación a través de Internet por medio de aplicaciones móviles y redes sociales. Kohut *et al.* (2012) determinaron que, en España, el 96% de la población adulta tenía (al menos) un teléfono móvil. Además, el 42% dijo formar parte de redes sociales, con un pico entre los adultos jóvenes menores de 29 años, de los cuales, el 81% afirmó participar activamente a través de ellas.

En principio, sería de esperar que estos nuevos modos comunicativos se usaran principalmente para mantener conversaciones cotidianas a través de un canal alternativo. Sin embargo, después de revisar el trabajo de otros autores (véase Munro y Manning, 2012; Adu-Kumi, 2016; Timmermans y De Caluwé, 2017; Hobbs, *et al.*, 2017; Timmermans y Courtois, 2018; Punyanunt-Carter, 2018), se vio que las nuevas tecnologías se están utilizando para propósitos de todo tipo, desde las interacciones más rutinarias (p. ej., llamar al trabajo para avisar de que llegarás tarde a una reunión importante) hasta las conversaciones más íntimas (p. ej., conocer a gente con el fin de iniciar una relación).

En los últimos años, esta práctica en particular ha sido objeto de estudio de lingüistas, sociólogos, y psicólogos (véase Ben-Ze'ev, 2004; Hall *et al.*, 2010; Hall y Xing, 2015), puesto que existe la posibilidad de que a través de Internet, las personas se desinhiban más (véase Suler, 2004) y sean más propensas al coqueteo y a comportarse de forma más seductora (véase Bruckman, 1993). Se han realizado estudios desde la perspectiva de la comunicación digital (CD en adelante) (véase Thurlow y Mroczek, 2011; Tagg, 2015; Blitvich y Bou-Franch, 2019) con el fin de investigar el flirteo (véase Hobbs *et al.*, 2017; Punyanunt-Carter y Wagner, 2018), especialmente a través de aplicaciones móviles específicamente diseñadas para este propósito, como lo es *Tinder* (véase James, 2015; Lefebvre, 2018; Timmermans y Courtois, 2018), poniendo de manifiesto que determinadas prácticas, como el uso de estilos más directos, están siendo utilizadas con mayor frecuencia que cara a cara.

Sin embargo, a pesar del interés que el flirteo a través de las redes ha despertado, no se han llevado a cabo muchos estudios contrastivos que aborden las estrategias más

populares utilizadas por los hablantes de inglés y español. De hecho, otra área que continúa mayormente inexplorada es la efectividad, desde el punto de vista de la comunicación digital y del análisis conversacional (AC) de las diferentes formas de iniciar una conversación, desde la perspectiva de (Kleinke *et al.*, 1986), y de los estilos de flirteo (Hall *et al.*, 2010).

Además, puesto que hombres y mujeres con distintos intereses sexuales a menudo hacen un uso diferente de las aplicaciones como *Tinder*, el género y la orientación sexual de los encuestados resultaron ser dos variables a tener en cuenta. Es sabido que, en este tipo de aplicaciones, el porcentaje de usuarios hombres supera en gran medida al de mujeres, además, en general, los hombres tienden a ser menos exigentes a la hora de deslizar hacia la derecha (modo en el que se indica en *Tinder* y otras aplicaciones similares que te gusta un perfil). Por tanto, las mujeres interesadas en contactar con hombres a menudo obtienen una gran cantidad de “*matches*” en comparación con otros perfiles de usuario. Por tanto, cuando finalmente consiguen un “*match*”, son los hombres los que necesitan prestar especial atención a su elección de palabras para así poder obtener una respuesta cooperativa que pueda dar pie a continuar la conversación.

Es por ello que se consideró que sería útil estudiar la respuesta que darían las mujeres a una serie de iniciadores de la conversación (IC en adelante) en inglés y en español con el fin de identificar cuáles eran los más efectivos, es decir, aquellos que recogían un mayor volumen de respuestas preferidas (en base a los criterios de actitud, AC y la taxonomía de respuesta a cumplidos de Herbert (1986)). Para ello, se dará respuesta a las siguientes preguntas de investigación:

RQ1: ¿Qué tipos de iniciadores de conversación son los más propensos a generar respuestas preferidas en mujeres?

RQ2: ¿Cuál es el comportamiento lingüístico de las mujeres en inglés y español en respuesta a estos iniciadores de conversación? Específicamente, ¿qué actitudes muestran hacia los iniciadores de conversación utilizados por hombres y cómo se manifiestan a través del lenguaje?

RQ3: ¿Cuáles son las similitudes y diferencias entre las personas que interactúan en español y las que lo hacen en inglés?

Además, las respuestas a estas preguntas y los resultados obtenidos del análisis de datos intentarán verificar la validez de las siguientes hipótesis:

H1: A pesar de la aparente falta de interés mostrada por las mujeres ante los iniciadores de conversación de los tipos físico y coqueto en interacciones cara a cara;

se espera apreciar un cambio que posicione este tipo de técnicas entre las más populares de la comunicación a través de *Tinder* como consecuencia de las características de la comunicación digital (i.e. un elevado número de "*matches*", la naturaleza de la aplicación como pasatiempo, y el reducido número de consecuencias en términos de "imagen pública")

H2: Cuando los hombres utilizan aquellos iniciadores de conversación que las mujeres encuentran más atractivos, se prevé que las mujeres tiendan a responder con actitud positiva por medio de un “movimiento de iniciación” o “movimiento de respuesta + movimiento de iniciación”, para así mostrar su interés en mantener abierto el canal comunicativo propiciando futuras interacciones, puesto que los “movimientos de respuesta”, pese a ser colaborativos, no motivan tan claramente que se continúe la interacción. Además, se espera que muestren su interés recurriendo a estrategias del tipo “Acuerdo- Aceptación”, “Otra interpretación-pregunta” u “Otra interpretación-Invitación/ Ofrecimiento/ Propuesta”.

H3: El español es un idioma que se ha identificado con valores orientados a la cortesía positiva, mientras que el inglés pertenece a una cultura de cortesía negativa (Hickey, 2000; Pinto, 2008). En consecuencia, se espera que las personas que coqueteen en español a través de *Tinder* sean más abiertas, experimentales y juguetonas que aquellas que interactúan en inglés que, posiblemente, serán más reservadas, implícitas y corteses.

Para llevar a cabo esta investigación, se diseñaron dos cuestionarios y una entrevista. Finalmente, la muestra de datos que se utilizó estaba compuesta por cinco iniciadores conversacionales que fueron, primero, juzgados en términos de preferencia y grado en el que eran considerados explícitos por las mujeres entrevistadas y luego utilizados como *Discourse Completion Tests* (DCT) para estudiar la reacción que suscitarían en las mujeres si fueran utilizados como forma de empezar una conversación en *Tinder*. Los cinco iniciadores conversacionales utilizados y clasificados, siguiendo las topologías de Kleinke *et al.* (1986) y Hall *et al.* (2010) pueden observarse en la figura que se presenta a continuación.

	Clasificación según Kleinke <i>et al.</i>	Inventario de los estilos de flirteo de Hall <i>et al.</i>	CO
Tienes cara de ser super inteligente! Y encima estudias X! Yo no sería capaz...	Directo	Sincero	CO3: Inteligente
You must be super intelligent! And you are studying I couldn't if I tried			
Hola!	Inocuo	Educado	CO1: Hola!
Hey!			
Titanic. Lo siento, necesitaba decir algo que rompiera el hielo	Humor frívolo	Juguetón	CO7: Titanic
Titanic. Sorry, that was a bad icebreaker			
Oye, esos pantalones no serán 10% algodón, 90% ácido giberélico? Porque llevo un rato mirándolos y estoy experimentando un importante alargamiento de tallo	Humor frívolo/ directo	Físico	CO8: Tallo
Are those trousers made of gibberellic acid? Because it's promoting elongation of my stem			
Las rosas son preciosas, las violetas están bien.	Humor frívolo/ Inocuo	Físico	CO6: Rosas
Si tú eres el nueve, yo me pido ser el seis			
Roses are gorgeous. Violets are fine. How about you be the six, and I'll be the nine?			

Figura I. Clasificación de los iniciadores de conversación según Kleinke *et al.* (1986) y Hall *et al.* (2010).

Los resultados de la entrevista mostraron que los IICC “IC3: Inteligente”, “IC1: Hola!” y “IC7: Titanic” eran los menos explícitos y también los más frecuentemente preferidos entre las mujeres mientras que “IC8: Tallo” y “IC6: Rosas” incluían referencias sexuales más explícitas y, en general, no eran demasiado bien recibidos. A continuación, se procedió al análisis de los resultados desde el punto de vista de la actitud comunicativa (véase Jung, 1921; Ajzen, 1989), mostrada, así como del análisis conversacional y del tipo de recurso utilizado, según la clasificación de Herbert (1986) de respuestas a cumplidos.

En cuanto a actitud, los resultados mostraron, como era de esperar, grandes diferencias estadísticamente significativas entre los tres IICC preferidos y los dos menos preferidos, puesto que los primeros contaban con una gran cantidad de respuestas positivas (200 en español y 112 en inglés) y pocas respuestas negativas (41 en español y 27 en inglés) y lo opuesto ocurría en el caso de los segundos (19 respuestas positivas en español y 17 en inglés; 81 respuestas negativas en español y 50 en inglés). Además, al comparar los IICC dentro de sus respectivos grupos (es decir, los preferidos entre sí y lo mismo entre los no preferidos), también pudieron apreciarse diferencias, si bien no tan marcadas, por ejemplo, “IC3: Inteligente” y “IC1: Hola!” contaban con una mayor cantidad de respuestas positivas (102 y 126 en total, respectivamente) que “IC7: Titanic” (84 en total). Sin embargo, no pudieron observarse diferencias estadísticamente significativas entre las respuestas en español y en inglés.

Posteriormente, se aplicó la clasificación de análisis conversacional a la muestra. Este análisis mostró que, a pesar de que en general no se podía apreciar gran diferencia entre las respuestas en español y en inglés; en español, las mujeres utilizaron la forma preferida

“movimiento de respuesta + movimiento de iniciación (MRMI)” significativamente con mayor frecuencia ($p = <0,001$) en el caso de los IICC más populares que en los no populares. Además, en este caso, si bien las diferencias no eran estadísticamente significativas, ciertas tendencias fueron identificadas que posicionaban “IC3: Inteligente” como el IC más popular (solo considerando su alto número de respuestas del tipo MRMI. Además, es importante mencionar que la “no respuesta” fue una estrategia usada por varias mujeres tanto entre los IICC preferidos como entre los no preferidos, si bien, en el caso de estos últimos (y tan solo en la muestra en español), se observó que algunas mujeres habían decidido deshacer el “match”. La relevancia de esta información puede ser grande puesto que podría indicar que los IC preferidos (como “IC3: Inteligente” y “IC1: Hola!”) si bien lo son en base a su forma (ej. No contienen referencias sexuales explícitas), a veces ven su efectividad mermada en este tipo de medios debido a la importancia que tienen en ellos aspectos como la originalidad. Por tanto, y aprovechando el poco coste que supone para la “imagen pública” utilizar estrategias más atrevidas en Internet gracias al anonimato, podría darse el caso que IC como “IC7: Titanic”, “IC8: Tallo” o “IC6: Rosas” recibieran una mayor cantidad de respuestas positivas que si fueran utilizados en un contexto no digital. Sin embargo, dado que la muestra estudiada es relativamente pequeña y, además, podría estar contaminada (pues las respuestas fueron recogidas en forma de DCT en lugar de ser datos naturales y, además, el orden en que se plantearon los IICC pudo afectar la predisposición de los sujetos a responder de forma más o menos positiva a los distintos IICC), es un aspecto que puede ser el foco de futuras investigaciones.

Finalmente, los resultados obtenidos de la clasificación de Herbert (1986), mostraron que, tanto en el caso de los IICC populares (“IC3: Inteligente”, “IC1: Hola!” y “IC7: Titanic”) como en el de los no populares (“IC8: Tallo” y “IC6: Rosas”), la mayoría de las respuestas positivas se formularon como “Acuerdo- aceptación”) y la mayoría de las respuestas negativas como “Desacuerdo- no aceptación”, independientemente del tipo de respuesta según la teoría de análisis conversacional. Si bien estos resultados no muestran un excesivo interés por parte de los sujetos en tomar la iniciativa en la conversación, son respuestas cooperativas y muestran su predisposición a continuar hablando. Además, en el caso de las respuestas positivas de los IICC más populares, también pudo observarse que las mujeres recurrían con relativa frecuencia a la utilización de fórmulas del tipo “Acuerdo. Transferencia” y “Otra interpretación-pregunta”. En el caso de las respuestas negativas, sus altos números de respuestas negativas de los tipos “Desacuerdo- no

aceptación” y “Desacuerdo- ignorar” se vieron parcialmente mitigados por la utilización, con cierta frecuencia, de estrategias del tipo “Acuerdo. Transferencia” y “Otra interpretación- Invitación/ Ofrecimiento/ Propuesta”.

Por lo tanto, en lo referente a las preguntas de investigación y las hipótesis, puede decirse que este estudio ha revelado que, de los cinco IICC analizadas, “IC3: Inteligente”, “IC1: Hola!” y “IC7: Titanic”, recibieron, en ese orden, una mayor cantidad de respuestas preferidas, desde el punto de vista de la actitud comunicativa, el análisis conversacional y la clasificación de Herbert (1986) de la respuesta a cumplidos. Es decir, se comprobó que, como en el cara a cara, el estilo “directo” y “sincero” pareció resultar el más efectivo, seguido por el “inocuo” y “educado”. Aparentemente, y al contrario de lo esperado, en Tinder, al igual que cara a cara, el humor frívolo y los comentarios “juguetones” o “físicos” no son bien recibidos entre el público femenino, si bien, la percepción de los mismos mejoraba si no contaban con referencias sexuales explícitas, como en el caso de “IC7: Titanic”.

En cuanto al tipo de respuesta preferida, puesto que la finalidad de estos IICC era empezar una conversación, aquellas respuestas que fomentaban la continuación de la misma (como las de los tipos MI o MRMI), eran vistas como las más preferidas (y, en consecuencia, eran las que resultaron ser más usadas en las tres IICC más populares). Por el contrario, aquellas respuestas que impedían la comunicación (como deshacer el “match” o no responder) o que eran poco cooperativas (como los MR con actitud negativa), eran más comunes entre los IICC menos populares. En cuanto al contraste entre las respuestas en español e inglés, a pesar de las diferencias esperadas, basadas en los distintos comportamientos pragmáticos típicos de las dos culturas, los resultados de los dos idiomas no mostraron diferencias significativas. Esto puede deberse a que 76,5% de las mujeres que respondió al cuestionario en inglés eran también hablantes de español y, 5% de las mismas respondió al cuestionario tanto en la versión en inglés como en la de español.

Considerando los resultados obtenidos y valorando las limitaciones del estudio, se considera que futuras investigaciones podrían ser llevadas a cabo con la finalidad de probar la consistencia de los resultados utilizando datos naturales. Además, sería interesante que los sujetos de estudio realizaran una prueba que valorar su nivel de competencia pragmático-lingüística en ambos idiomas para descartar la contaminación de la muestra al utilizar sujetos que no dominan el comportamiento político en uno o los dos idiomas. Sería también útil utilizar dos grupos separados de sujetos para que así no

podrían incurrir en transferencias de estructuras si responden a los mismos IICC en los dos idiomas. Finalmente, sería interesante realizar estudios similares valorando el comportamiento de hombres y de mujeres de distintos rangos de edad y orientaciones sexuales para observar si hay diferencias entre los colectivos.

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1. Introduction

Today's society is ruled by the need to exchange information, both physically (as in face-to-face conversations) and online (through Skype, Facetime, Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.). In fact, this may be foreshadowing the evolution of humanity's interplay. In other words, traditional mediums of communication, namely face-to-face or phone calls, are being substituted by Internet-mediated approaches, such as texting, mobile phone applications and social networks. Kohut *et al.* (2012) affirmed that 96% of Spain's adult population own mobile phones and 42% of them admit engaging in social networks, with a peak among young adults under 29 years old. Among this particular age group, 81% of users claimed to interact through social media.

Seemingly, these new communicative modes would be expected to be mostly used in order to have ordinary everyday conversations through an alternative channel. Nonetheless, after reviewing the literature on the topic (Munro and Manning, 2012; Adu-Kumi, 2016; Timmermans and De Caluwé, 2017; Hobbs *et al.*, 2017; Timmermans and Courtois, 2018; Punyanunt-Carter, 2018; Vangelisti, and Perlman, 2018), it became evident that new technologies are being employed for purposes of all types, from the most routine interactions (e.g. calling in to work to let the head of the department know that you will be late for an important meeting) to the most intimate conversations (e.g. getting to know someone so as to decide if you would be interested in starting a relationship with them).

This practice has gained interest in the last few years among scholars (Ben-Ze'ev, 2004; Hall *et al.*, 2010; Hall and Xing, 2015; Pilloton *et al.*, 2019). This has been motivated by the fact that some researchers believe that people might behave more seductively and are more likely to encourage flirtatious approaches in digital environments (see Bruckman, 1993). Consequently, studies have been conducted from the perspective of digital communication (DC henceforth) (Thurlow and Mroczek, 2011; Tagg, 2015; Blitvich and Bou-Franch, 2019) in order to investigate flirtatious intentions (Hobbs *et al.*, 2017; Punyanunt-Carter and Wagner, 2018), especially through specific mobile applications designed for this particular purpose, such as Tinder (James, 2015; Lefebvre, 2018; Timmermans and Courtois, 2018).

In spite of the interest which online flirting has recently aroused, not many contrastive studies addressing the flirtatious strategies used by speakers of English and Spanish have been carried out. In addition, further research is needed from the perspective of Relevance Theory (but see Herring, 2013; Yus-Ramos, 2011, 2017a). For instance, the effectiveness

of the different conversation openers (Kleinke *et al.*, 1986) and flirting styles (Hall *et al.*, 2010) on women's reactions is still an unexplored area within digital communication studies and from the perspective of Conversation Analysis.

Further, the use made of apps such as Tinder is very different when comparing female and male users. Men who are eager to contact women tend to get less "matches"¹ than women interested in talking to men, even if the latter "swipe right"² on more profiles than their female counterparts. Consequently, when a "match" is made, men need to pay special attention to their word choice to assure a positive response so as to keep the conversation going. Therefore, this study is intended to explore what conversation openers (COs henceforth) are more likely to generate preferred responses when men start a conversation with women through Tinder. More specifically, the aim of this research is to examine which are the most effective COs used by men when approaching women through Tinder using English and Spanish. In order to do so, the answer to the following research questions will be provided:

RQ₁: What types of conversation starters are the most likely to generate preferred answers in women?

RQ₂: What is women's linguistic behaviour in English and Spanish in response to these conversation openers? Specifically, what attitudes do they show towards male conversation openers and how are they manifested through language?

RQ₃: What are the similarities and differences between people who interact in Spanish and those who do so in English?

Furthermore, the answers to these questions and the results obtained from the data analysis will attempt to verify the validity of the following hypotheses:

H₁: The entertaining nature of the app, the reduced number of consequences in terms of "face"³) and certain specific characteristics of digital communication (i.e. an elevated number of "matches") are expected to affect women's reactions to conversation starters and flirting techniques in such a way that these may differ with respect to their reactions in face-to-face interaction, locating cute-flippant and physical flirting techniques among the most popular in Tinder communication.

¹ In Tinder, to "get a match" means that two users have mutually liked each other's profiles. As a result, either of them can start a conversation.

² In Tinder, to "swipe right" means to indicate that a user is interested in another's profile.

³ 'Face' is a term coined by Goffman (1967) which makes reference to the public image of the self.

H₂: When approached by those conversation openers which they find most appealing, women would show interest in continuing the conversational exchange in a turn containing an Initiation move rather than just using only a Response Move and shaped as “Other interpretation: invitation/ offer/ request” or “other interpretation: question” since, in this manner, their interlocutor was given an opportunity to continue the conversational exchange.

H₃: Spanish is a language which has been identified with more positive-politeness oriented values while English has been said to belong to a more negative politeness⁴ culture (Hickey, 2000; Pinto, 2008). Consequently, it is expected that people flirting in Spanish through Tinder will be more open-minded, experimental and playful than those who interact in English who will possibly be more reserved, implicit and polite.

The dissertation has the following structure: After this introduction outlining the need, motivation and objectives of this study, Section 2 presents a review of the most relevant studies that have been carried out on flirting through digital communication. The data compilation procedure and the methodology used throughout the investigation is presented in Section 3. Section 4 shows the analysis and discussion of male conversation starters and women’s responses, paying attention to differences in conversational styles between English and Spanish. Section 5 summarises the results obtained from the analysis and exposes the conclusions which have been reached as well as providing suggestions for future lines of research. This section is followed by the list of references used and the appendixes containing the figures and graphs discussed in the analysis section.

⁴ Positive and negative politeness are terms coined by Brown and Levinson (1987). The former refers to the polite behaviour of people oriented at saving positive face by promoting their wish to be liked, approved of and feel part of the in-group, whereas the latter is a term coined by Brown and Levinson (1987) which makes reference to the polite behaviour of people oriented at saving negative face by preventing the person from being imposed upon and maintaining his freedom of action.

2. Theoretical Background

This section looks into the most relevant theories and classifications which have been used to carry out this investigation. First, it presents an overview of studies in the field of Digital Communication. Then, it reviews the theories used for the classification and analysis of COs, namely Hall *et al.*'s (2010) Flirting Styles Inventory and Kleinke *et al.*'s classification of opening lines (1986). Finally, it offers a description of Conversation Analysis and Herbert's Taxonomy of compliment responses (1986), given they are used to examine the responses obtained from the Discourse Completion Tasks (DCT) embedded in the questionnaire.

2.1. Digital Communication (DC): "The case of Tinder"

In the era of technology and the Internet, mediated communication plays a key role in everyday communication of many people all over the world. According to Clement (2020)⁵, in April 2020, 59% of the global population, that is, 4.57 billion people, were active internet users, out of which, 3.76 were active mobile social media users. Computer-mediated-communication, or, digital communication⁶ is a branch of linguistics whose purpose is to study people's communicative behaviour conducted through a digital gadget, since, as put forward by Yao and Ling (2019: 6) "technological tools may not only facilitate, or influence human actions, but could have also disrupted fundamental social and behavioural processes".

As explained by Yao and Ling (2019), the special issue Web 2.0. and user-generated content published by Walther and Jang's (2012) played a key role in shifting the importance of social media from a perimetral position to a more central one. Consequently, network-like mobile apps have become the focus of study of scholars in the last few years (Sahafizadeh and Tork-Ladani, 2020; de Luca *et al.*, 2020; Kohut *et al.* 2012, among others). Moreover, since the emergence of online dating apps such as Tinder, Bumble, OKCupid, Badoo, etc., people's flirtatious interactions online have also awaken the interest of multiple scholars (e.g. Adu-Kumi, 2016; Ben-Ze'ev, 2004; Eskridge, 2019; Lykens *et al.*, 2019, Mortensen, 2017; among others). The particular case

⁵ Information retrieved on June 25th 2020 from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/>

⁶ In this study, the term digital communication will be used to address this branch of linguistics since, as reported by Flanagan (2019: 29), "*Digital communication* describes the process of information transmission in a fashion that emphasizes the relatively recent and comparatively novel interventions facilitated by contemporary communication and information technologies".

of Tinder has been looked into by Escobar-Pulgar (2019); Hobbs *et al.* (2017); James (2015); LeFebre (2018); Punyanunt-Carter (2018); Sumster *et al.* (2017); Timmermans and De Caluwé (2017); Timmermans and Courtois (2018).

One of the most popular online dating apps is Tinder, an online smartphone location-bound app created in September 2012⁷. It is officially described as an app intended for people who want to “Find friends, relationships and everything in between”. It has been estimated that in the last 5 years, the app has been downloaded around 287 million times from Apple Store or Google Play, which places it among the five more popular ones. Moreover, this app is international: it is available in 190 countries and 46 languages. In order to be able to interact with others through Tinder, a person needs to create a profile and log in. Then, the user needs to specify the gender, age gap and radius of proximity (kms) of the people s/he is interested in contacting. Once the user logs in, s/he is presented with the profiles of those people who meet the specified requirements. At this point, users are presented with three options: they can swipe right to indicate that they like a profile, they can swipe left to show that they do not, or they can swipe up to give a profile a “superlike”. However, in the free version, this can only be done once a day. If two people mutually swipe right in each other’s profiles, a match is made and either of the two can message the other to start a conversation.

2.2. Starting a conversation in digital environments: Kleinke *et al.*’s classification of opening lines (1986)

In 1986, Chris Kleinke, Frederik Meeker and Richard Stanesky collected around 100 COs (also known as opening gambits) and then classified them into three subcategories: direct, innocuous and cute-flippant.

- Direct opening gambits involved an explicit proclamation of interest and, according to Cunningham and Barbee, sometimes included “elements of self-disclosure, flattery, or self-effacement” (2008:107). The example provided by Kleinke *et al.* in order to illustrate this type of CO is “I feel a little embarrassed about this, but I’d really like to meet you”.

⁷ In 2016, BBC NEWS conducted a study to find out what were the most popular dating apps throughout the world. Their results showed that in Spain, Tinder was the second most popular dating app, only behind Badoo. Information retrieved on July 10th 2020 from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-2e3f0042-75f6-4bd1-b4fe-9056540c65f8>

- Innocuous opening gambits were characterised for being very subtle approaches which did not hide any second intentions or implicit meaning. Examples of this are greetings such as “Hello, how are you?”
- Cute-Flippant opening gambits were humorous remarks which often included sexual references or invitations to further interaction, for example: “Do you like raisins? How do you feel about a date?”.

As reported by Kleinke *et al.* (1986), Cunningham (1989) and Cunningham and Barbee (2008), when studying the reaction of women to various COs, it was discovered that direct and innocuous COs were preferred by far to cute-flippant COs, however, as these studies were conducted in face-to-face interaction. It is possible that people react differently when approached through Tinder using this type of COs (see Hypothesis 2 above). Indeed, as observed by Cunningham and Barbee “COs are effective to the extent that the sender meets the receiver’s needs and expectations” (2008:197).

2.3. Flirting Styles: Hall *et al.*’s (2010) framework

In 2010 Jeffrey Hall, Steve Carter, Michael Cody and Julie Albright developed the Flirting Style Inventory (FSI) with the aim of classifying the various ways in which different people, who felt a romantic interest for another person conferred this idea. Hall *et al.*’s FSI (2010: 369-371) consisted of five different flirting techniques, namely traditional, physical, sincere, playful and polite:

- The Traditional Flirting Style “measures the degree to which individuals behave within the ascribed limits of traditional gender roles during courtship”. In other words, people who use flirting techniques typical of this style tend to respect gender-specific traditional roles (i.e. expecting the man to make the first verbal move). Considering that, according to statistics⁸, 63% of men on Tinder initiate a conversation with a match in the first five minutes while only 18% of the female Tinder users do so, it can be assumed that, in this aspect, most Tinder conversations can be said to belong within this category. Nevertheless, Tinder conversations are not likely to follow this flirting style in any other manner, which is the reason why no further attention will be paid to this flirting style in this study.

⁸ Information retrieved on June 28th 2020 from: <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/tinder-statistics/#:~:text=be%20messed%20first%E2%80%A6,Tinder%20Usage%20Statistics,billion%20matches%20have%20been%20registered.>

- The Physical Flirting Style “is based on the prevalence of sexual communication courtship initiation”. This type of approaches, due to the nature of Tinder and its extended usage as a hook up app, is quite recurrent among its users. Examples of this flirting style are invitations to meet in person, insinuations of sexual arousal, etc.
- The Sincere Flirting Style “is marked by a desire to create an emotional bond with a potential romantic partner”. People making use of this approach are likely to show their interest for the other person, and/or to provide information about themselves (also known as reference to the other and self-reference, according to Devito, 2012). In face-to-face interaction, this has proved to be the most successful manner of interaction as reported by Clark *et al.* (1999) and Hall *et al.* (2008) among both men and women but, as claimed by Kleinke *et al.* (1986) and Cunningham (1989), women in particular tend to favour verbal strategies directed at establishing emotional bonds. Nevertheless, considering that Tinder is regarded by many as a hook up app rather than a dating site, it is possible that this type of techniques is not that well regarded in this particular context.
- The Playful Flirting Style “is designed to capture a style of communication of attraction that views flirting as fun and not necessarily tied to relationship development”. As put forward by Whitty (2003) and Henningsen (2004), the act of flirting can sometimes be regarded as the goal rather than the means. In Tinder, an app where, according to statistics⁹, 44% of its users log in for “confidence-boosting procrastination”, it is likely that this type of approaches will be positively perceived by many female Tinder users.
- The Polite Flirting Style “attempts to capture a more rule-governed and cautious approach to the communication of romantic interest”). When people use this flirting style, they tend to resort to traditional COs such as greetings. It is one of the most frequent and less elaborated flirting styles, together with the fact that it is also one of the safest in terms of face preservation. However, the overwhelming offers with which women are presented in Tinder, as reported by García and de Cos (2017) and Tyson *et al.* (2016) might hinder the effectivity of this approach.

However, as pointed out by McBain *et al.* (2013:82), context plays an important role in courtship interactions and certain styles have been correlated with particular flirting

⁹ Information retrieved on April 14th 2020 from: <https://lendedu.com/blog/tinder-match-millennials/>

behaviours. This is the case, for instance, of playful flirts who would not often show sincere interest in a person except from when they are speed dating. Despite the fact that this model has been designed for offline interaction, some scholars (Scharlott and Christ, 1995; Whitty, 2002, 2004) have defended that the flirtatious behaviour of people on and offline very often coincide. However, some practices such as playful flirtatious behaviour become an aim in itself in online interaction, as reported by Whitty (2003), rather than just a useful tool to get to know people before meeting them in person.

2.4. Conversation Analysis (CA)

CA has been selected as one useful approach to Tinder conversational exchanges since, in the era of online flirting, the form of the COs and its effectivity proves of great importance in order to stand out in apps such as this one. Indeed, according to statistics¹⁰, female profiles liking male ones unselectively get 200 matches and 126 messages within an hour.

The study of conversational exchanges has been addressed by several scholars throughout the years. However, it can be said that the staples were set by Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson between the 1960s and the 1970s. This discipline is defined by Sacks (1992) as the systematic study of conversation. This is possible because, as explained by Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008:11), “ordinary talk appears to be a ‘highly organized, socially ordered phenomenon’”. According to CA, human conversations are functionally organised in moves. As expressed by Johnstone (2018:133), “a move consists of the amount of talk required to perform one action in the ‘language game’ in which interlocutors are engaged”. The notion of conversational turns was first introduced by Tsui in 1994 and it makes reference to all that is said by a speaker before the conversational floor is given to another one. Then, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), Stubbs (1983) and Tsui (1994) catalogued conversational moves into three main groups, namely initiation move (IM), an utterance utilised in order to start a conversational exchange; response move (RM), the manner in which a person who has been approached by means of an IM provides an answer—whether preferred or dispreferred—; and follow-up, an utterance made after a RM by the person who started the conversational exchange in order to acknowledge the previous RM. The combination of the two first ones constitutes an adjacency pair. This concept was coined by Sinclair

¹⁰ Retrieved on 16th of May 2020 from: <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/tinder-statistics/>

and Coulthard (1975) and it was used to designate two one-turn exchanges between two speakers. In other words, when a request is formulated it can be said that it only truly acquires its meaning when it is accepted (or rejected). For the purpose of this investigation, follow-ups will not be regarded since only the first two conversational turns of a conversation were collected and analysed.

Another aspect to be considered is the interlocutor's attitude to preferred and dispreferred responses, the concept of "attitude" is a term which psychologists, such as Jung (1921:687) have used to determine "a readiness of the psyche to act or react in a certain way" or, as Ajzen (1989:241) puts it: "an individual's disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, or event, or to any other discriminable aspect of the individual's world". In this study, the concept of attitude will be used to judge the level of acceptance distilled by the answers of the respondents. In this manner, cooperative and preferred responses were said to have a positive attitude, uncooperative and dispreferred ones were said to have a negative attitude and those answers which were not too polarised were said to have an unclear attitude and were disregarded.

Despite the fact that the original theories on CA were elaborated with the purpose of studying oral conversation (often by means of transcripts or recordings), as time has gone by and the different forms of communication have evolved in order to meet the requirements of the new generations (from SMS to the most advanced social networks), this discipline has also been applied to study DC (Maíz-Arévalo, 2013; Farina, 2018; Ogiermann and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2019). As a matter of fact, since DC interaction mostly takes place in a written format, it has proven even more effective and less time-consuming than oral data since, in this case, there is no need for transcription. Moreover, DC also facilitates the analysis since conversational turns are clearly marked. In the case of DC, but particularly in the case of Tinder, this shifting from one speaker to the other is very clearly visible, since the messages produced by one person appear at one side of the screen and the messages sent by the other one do so at the other side. Moreover, as mentioned before, the first exchanges of conversations are often shaped as adjacency pairs. In this research, as will be explained in the following section, the first turn (IM) is provided and the reaction of the receiver is studied in order to find out if they choose to ignore the move (N/A), complete the adjacency pair (RM), begin a new adjacency pair (IM) or combine the two last options (RMIM).

2.5. Herbert's classification of compliment responses (1986)

Despite the fact that not all the COs used in the study were compliments, it was believed that the nature of COs and that of compliments were similar to some extent. On the one hand, the function of complimenting is “to express approval, admiration or respect”¹¹, on the other hand, by choosing to start a Tinder conversation, the person is showing their interest in the other person. Consequently and, disregarding other more recent or specialized classifications summarized in Placencia, M. E. and Lower, A. (2017), such as the ones by Holmes (1986), Pomerantz (1978), or Placencia *et al.* (2016), the one that Herbert designed to study compliment responses has been modified to fit the particular requirements of the sample and applied to analyse the data, considering the lack of a more suitable classification.

In 1986, Herbert studied the manner in which people replied to compliments. For these means, he designed a classification consistent of two main subgroups (“Agreement” and “Non Agreement”), with the addition of a third less conventional group (“Other Interpretations”).

Within the subgroup named as “Agreement” were found those instances in which the respondents showed their compliance with the compliment they had been paid. They did so in three different manners: “Acceptances”, “Comment History” and “Transfers”. “Acceptances” were those cases in which people reacted favourably to the complimentary remarks by showing their compliance and they could be shaped as “Appreciation Tokens”, “Comment Acceptances”, or “Praise Upgrades”. “Appreciation Tokens” referred to those instances in which people showed their liking for a particular comment by, for example, smiling warmly. Then, when people showed their agreement with the compliment and accepted it or thanked their interlocutors, it was said that they were performing examples of “Comment Acceptance”. Finally, when people were so sure that they deserved the compliment to the extent of responding in a manner which would exaggerate even more the attribute commented, they were said to make use of “Praise Upgrades”. Additionally, “Comment History” made reference to those compliment responses in which interlocutors provided some extra information about the origin of the object, sometimes as a type of justification. In a similar line, “Transfers” referred to those moments in which the compliment was redirected towards someone else by making them

¹¹ Retrieved on 6th September 2020 from:
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es/diccionario/ingles/compliment>

the true addressees of the compliment (“Reassignment”) or by returning the compliment (“Return”).

To show disaccord with a compliment, four different types of “Non Agreement” techniques were listed; namely “Scale Down”, “Question”, “Non Acceptance”, and “No Acknowledgement”. “Scale Down” can be understood as the opposite of “Praise Upgrade” and it makes reference to those times in which people diminished the importance or the extent to which the compliment made reference to them. Furthermore, people sometimes doubted the compliment they had been paid and replied in the shape of “Questions”. Additionally, there were moments in which people chose to reject the compliment; these were named “Non Acceptance”. Finally, the behaviour of ignoring the compliment (e.g. by not responding to the CO) received the name of No Acknowledgement. The following figure summarises Herbert’s (1986) taxonomy of compliment responses.

A. Agreement

I. Acceptances

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. Appreciation Token | <i>Thank you</i> |
| 2. Comment Acceptance | <i>Thanks, it's my favorite too</i> |
| 3. Praise Upgrade | <i>Really brings out the blue in my eyes, doesn't it?</i> |

II. Comment History

I bought it from a trip to Arizona

III. Transfers

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Reassignment | <i>My brother gave it to me</i> |
| 2. Return | <i>So is yours</i> |

B. Non-agreement

I. Scale Down

It's really quite old

II. Question

Do you really think so?

III. Non-acceptances

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1. Disagreement | <i>I hate it</i> |
| 2. Qualification | <i>It's all right, but Len's is nicer</i> |

IV. No Acknowledgement

[silence]

C. Other interpretations

I. Request

You wanna borrow this one too?

Figure 1. Herbert’s Taxonomy of Compliment responses (Herbert, 1986:79).

Nonetheless, since these categories were designed to address compliment responses and this study focuses on responses to flirtatious COs, the classification was adapted in order to meet data requirements and can be observed in Figure 2.

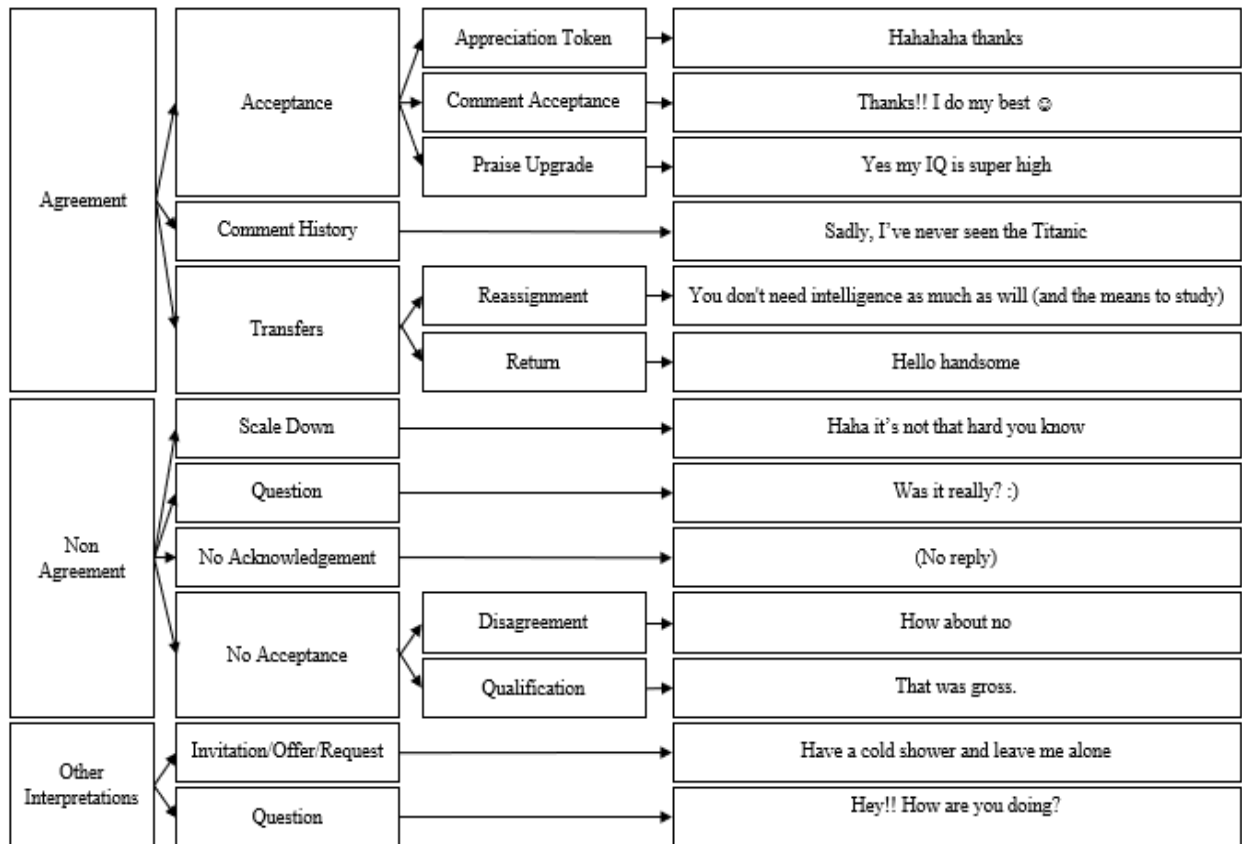


Figure 2. Adaptation of Herbert's classification of compliment responses.

3. Method Section

In order to find out the male conversation starters that generated most preferred answers among women and to examine how they reacted to such starters in both English and Spanish, two questionnaires and an online written interview were conducted and distributed telematically. Subsequently, the data collected was analysed quantitatively, so as to reveal the general tendencies and to check for statistical significance, and qualitatively, in order to understand what the motivations behind these choices were. This section covers two aspects: the data gathered, and the different methods used to approach it.

First, the participants' profiles are displayed. Then, the different data collection procedures used in this research are presented. Lastly, the methodology followed to analyse the results is explained. For the sake of clarity, the data collection section is divided into three subsections, one for each of the data collection procedures used for this research.

3.1. Data Collection

In order to conduct this study, three different methods were utilised to collect data; namely, two questionnaires and one structured interview through WhatsApp.

3.1.1. Questionnaire 1

This survey¹² was designed with the purpose of collecting some general information about the flirtatious practices of young adults both online and offline, and to collect some real-life examples of COs by means of Critical Incident Techniques (CIT henceforth). This questionnaire was distributed through WhatsApp, published on Facebook student pages such as "Estudiantes UCM" and it remained accessible for a period of 60 days. In order to pilot the study, it was proofread by five people before launching it and a question asking for feedback was included at the end of the form.

The survey was subdivided into two sections. The first of the two consisted of four multiple-choice questions intended at collecting personal data for statistical purposes (age, gender, sexual orientation and relationship status) and the second one was designed so as to learn about the participants' behaviours, their personal preferences in terms of the

¹² <https://forms.gle/WSafoAgFPUyT8zmK6>

channels used for flirtatious interaction and the linguistic techniques they used for these purposes.

The second section was then subdivided into four subsections. The first one included a combination of four multiple-choice questions and two open-ended questions which collected general information about the respondents' flirting experience through different channels. The remaining three subsections were each focused on a different platform, including Tinder. For this study, only the responses in relation to Tinder were analysed.

This subsection was composed by eleven questions: seven multiple-choice questions, three open-ended questions and one Critical Incident Technique. The main interest of this research was set on the open-ended questions and on the CIT, an exercise first introduced by Flanagan (1954) and designed to collect particularly salient examples –i.e. the participants are required to make an effort to recall both positive and negative unusual or shocking examples. As a result, a battery of 65 different examples was collected from both the open-ended questions (more normative examples) and the CIT (unusual and memorable examples).

3.1.2. Questionnaire 2

In order to find out how women reacted to the different COs, a questionnaire was created (see Appendix 3) by means of Google Forms¹³ and its link was shared through WhatsApp, Instagram stories and Instagram posts. It could be accessed for 40 days. As a way of piloting, five people were asked to answer it before making it public and a question for the participants to comment on the possible difficulties they may have encountered responding to the survey was inserted. Piloting the second survey allowed to correct minor issues before launching it.

This was a bilingual English-Spanish questionnaire and the subjects could choose to fill in the questionnaire in the language(s) they felt most comfortable with. Depending on their preferences, participants could answer the survey just in one language or in both.

This questionnaire was divided into 13 sections. The first two sections were bilingual (English-Spanish). The first one intended to establish the participant's profile (age, gender, nationality and sexual orientation) inasmuch as it prevented underage people from

¹³ <https://forms.gle/5sRztGFZesmDf2EVA>

continuing with the questionnaire¹⁴. The second section led to four different paths depending, firstly, on the language selected by the participants and secondly, on the gender of the people they wanted to interact with. If the participants wished to complete the form in both languages and /or about people of both genders, once they responded in one manner, they were given the option to do so in the other. Since this investigation focuses on women being contacted by men, only their answers will be explained in detail.

The last section was divided into eight subsections. Each one was constituted by a DCT, which, as pointed out by Sweeney and Hua (2016:212), is “a type of production questionnaire in which speech acts are elicited in the written form by some kind of situational description”. In the case of this investigation, each DCT was constituted by a Tinder CO shaped as a conversation in Tinder by means of a fake Tinder conversation generator¹⁵ (see an example in both English and Spanish in Appendix 1). In order to recreate an ordinary Tinder chat, a profile picture was included (both men featured in the pictures were wearing sunglasses and they did not display any attributes which could be considered to influence female responses, such as presence of tattoos, piercings, skin marks, acne, etc.) and each of the two fake profiles (one in English and the other in Spanish) were given names (Will and Pablo). These names were selected after a Google search which placed them among the most popular male names in each of the two languages, respectively. As it would happen in Tinder after a match is made, the conversation imitated a situation in which women were contacted by men and they had to respond as they would if it was a real Tinder conversation. Finally, an open-ended question was included so the participants could report any other COs they had been familiar with.

3.1.3. The Interview

In order to decide which COs would be most interesting to study, a structured interview (see Appendix 2) was designed and distributed through WhatsApp.

The interview was elaborated in English and it consisted of four questions. The first one asked the interviewees to order the COs based on their personal preferences, the second one asked them if there were one or more instances that they particularly disliked

¹⁴ In this case, for legal reasons, respondents were asked to confirm that they were over 18 before encountering any of the explicit examples, since some of them might be considered inappropriate for younger audiences.

¹⁵ <https://www.tindertools.com/fake-tinder-message-generator/>

and why, the third one requested them to order the COs in terms of explicitness and, the last one, asked them if they would have responded differently if the CO had been formulated in Spanish.

Consequently, the following two lists were obtained from this process: the first one included the COs ordered based on the participants' personal preferences and the second one did so in terms of explicitness.

Most preferred	Least explicit
CO1: Hey!	CO1: Hey!
CO7: Titanic	CO3: Intelligent
CO4: Pizza	CO4: Pizza
CO3: Intelligent	CO5: Prison
CO5: Prison	CO7: Titanic
CO6: Roses	CO8: Stem
CO2: Horses	CO6: Roses
CO8: Stem	CO2: Horses
Least preferred	Most explicit

Figure 3. List of most and least preferred, most and least explicit COs.

3.1. Participants

As argued by Fox (2004), adults aged between 18 and 24 years old are known to be one of the most active flirtatious collectives (61% of them had flirted either 'today' or 'within the past week') and one of the most likely to do so online by means of dating apps such as Tinder. Moreover, as put forward by Iqbal (2020)¹⁶ with regard to Tinder, when people are interested in finding users of the opposite sex, it is men who usually contact women first. As shown in Figure 4 below, the sample was cleaned and only the data belonging to women aged between 18 and 30 was utilised (for further details see sections 3.2.1. and 3.2.2. and 3.2.3. However, it should be noted that even if the answers to questionnaire 1 and the interview were in English, the sample from questionnaire 2 was unevenly distributed between English and Spanish.

¹⁶ Retrieved on 30th of June 2020 from: <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/tinder-statistics/>

	Responses collected (Total number)	Respondents aged 18- 30 years old	Female respondents
Questionnaire 1	110	109	64
Questionnaire 2	252	143	135
Interview	10	10	10

Figure 4: Distribution of respondents of Questionnaires 1 and 2, and Interview.

Questionnaire 1 collected the answers of 110 participants. Nevertheless, there was one underaged person whose answers were disregarded since he did not meet the age requirements set for the sample collection. Consequently, the total number of responses utilised was 109 and they belonged to participants aged between 18 and 30. It should be mentioned that the sample was balanced in terms of gender distribution since 58.3% of the answers belonged to female subjects and 41.7% to male ones although the gender and sexual orientation was not considered since the main objective of this questionnaire was to collect examples of COs.

Questionnaire 2 was completed by 252 participants. Of these, a total of 135 belonged to women aged between 18 and 30 years old and were thus considered for this study. Moreover, it should be noticed that the participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire in English, Spanish or both. As a result, 84 responses were collected in Spanish and 51 were gathered in English (which, as illustrated in Figure 5, corresponded to 43 women who had answered the questionnaire only in Spanish, 10 who had done it in English, and 41 who had done so in both languages).

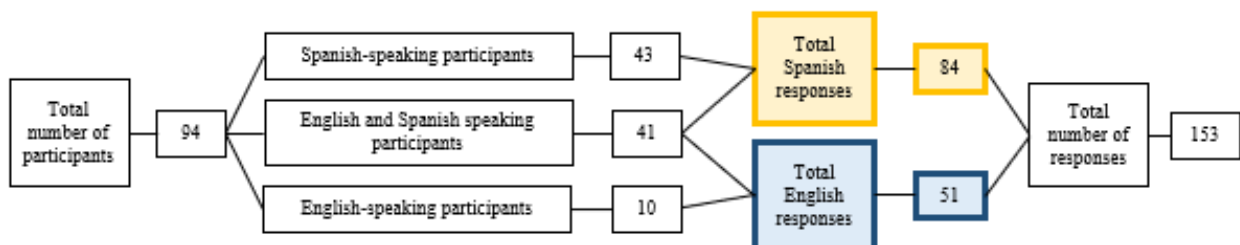


Figure 5. Distribution of participants and responses to questionnaire 2.

Finally, in order to select the women for the interview, from a contact list of 790 mobile phone numbers, the women between 18 and 30 were singled out to constitute a second

contact list which included 462 people. Then, 20 women were chosen at random and contacted via WhatsApp to offer them the opportunity to participate in the experiment. Finally, ten of the women agreed to take part in the study. During the interview, these women confirmed being within the age range between 18 and 30, sexually interested in (at least) men and having an intermediate to advanced level of both Spanish and English. Finally, they gave their consent to use the information provided for research purposes.

3.2. Methodology

First, the 65 COs obtained by means of Questionnaire 1, were classified according to Hall *et al.*'s FSI. Based on the first categorisation, all the interactions could be perceived as examples of a "traditional style" since, for the sake of the experiment (and mimicking the most frequent behaviour in the app), it was men who started the communicative exchange. Moreover, it would have been hard to perceive examples of "traditional" flirting procedures in such a non-traditional setting as Tinder. Therefore, the examples were classified into the four remaining subgroups (physical, sincere, polite and playful). Since Tinder is generally considered an app that people use to find a potential sexual partner rather than love, it was believed that it would be interesting to pay special attention to those instances which had been classified as examples of "physical" (i.e. "God, you are so hot", "how can you not have a bf, you are so damn pretty") or "playful" flirting techniques (i.e. "I know what you're thinking... 'sure, he looks nice enough, but can he ride a unicycle?' And the answer is no", "*La tortilla con cebolla o sin cebolla?*" [Do you like Spanish omelette with or without onion?]).

Therefore, as illustrated in Figure 2 below, three examples were selected as representative of the "physical" and the "playful" styles and one was selected from the "sincere" and "polite" ones. Next, the selected examples were analysed according to Kleinke, *et al.*'s approach (1986). That is, by studying if they were instances of direct, innocuous or cute-flippant COs. However, it should be noted that, in the cases where the COs fit into more than one category, they were regarded as sharing attributes of the two, even if the CO seemed to be a more salient example of one.

		Hall <i>et al.</i> 's FSI	Kleinke <i>et al.</i> 's Classification
CO1	Hola!	Polite	Innocuous
	Hey!		
CO2	Vaya... veo que te gustan los caballos... Menuda suerte, porque has dado con un semental ;)	Physical	Cute-flippant/ direct
	I see you like horses... That's lucky, because you've just found yourself a stallion ;)		
CO3	Tienes cara de ser super inteligente! Y encima estudias X! Yo no sería capaz...	Sincere	Direct
	You must be super intelligent! And you are studying I couldn't if I tried		
CO4	Dices en la descripción que te gusta la pizza... con piña o sin piña? Esa es la cuestión	Playful	Cute-flippant
	So you say in your bio you like pizza... to pineapple or not to pineapple? That is the question		
CO5	Hola acabo de salir de la cárcel y mis padres han cambiado la cerradura así que necesito un sitio donde pasar la noche. Por cierto, me gusta tu perro	Playful	Direct
	Hi I just got out of prison and my parents changed the locks so I could really use a place to stay. I like your dog, by the way		
CO6	Las rosas son preciosas, las violetas están bien. Si tú eres el nueve, yo me pido ser el seis	Physical	Cute- flippant/ Innocuous
	Roses are gorgeous. Violets are fine. How about you be the six, and I'll be the nine?		
CO7	Titanic. Lo siento, necesitaba decir algo que rompiera el hielo	Playful	Cute- flippant
	Titanic. Sorry, that was a bad icebreaker		
CO8	Oye, esos pantalones no serán 10% algodón, 90% ácido giberélico? Porque llevo un rato mirándolos y estoy experimentando un importante alargamiento de tallo	Physical	Cute- flippant/ direct
	Are those trousers made of gibberellic acid? Because it's promoting elongation of my stem		

Figure 6. CO classified in terms of Kleinke *et al.* and Hall *et al.*'s classifications.

Finally, since one of the aims of this study was to investigate flirtatious behaviour in connection to two different languages, all the selected examples were translated into either English or Spanish (depending on the language in which they were formulated by the respondents of the survey). The list of the selected examples and their translations was used to design the second questionnaire.

Then, in order to select which of the eight COs were to be studied for this dissertation, the results obtained from the interview were considered. First, the mode (the number that appears more frequently in a data set) was calculated for each of the places in the ranking. Then, the participants' answers were graded from 1 (least preferred) to 8 (most preferred) and added, the one with the highest number was the most preferred and so on. By combining these two methods, a final ranking which ordered the COs based on the interviewees' preferences was elaborated. Later, a similar method was used in order to

determine what the perceived order was in terms of explicitness. In this manner, the five COs which have been studied in depth in this investigation, were selected (two from the top of the ranking, two from the bottom and one from the middle).

First, the answers provided for the COs gathered by questionnaire 2 were allotted in terms of the attitude which they transmitted. This classification was based on the idea that, in Tinder, one of the most challenging phases is when men try to attract women's attention, among the several messages they receive every day. In order to achieve this, men tend to resort to diverse COs, with the purpose of finding the one which will get them noticed and will set a basis on which further conversational exchanges can be further developed. Consequently, the more likely the answers elaborated by the woman was to lead to another conversational exchange, the more positive it was believed to be.

Then, the answers were looked into from the perspective of CA. In these terms, the answers were analysed and classified into four categories: Response Move (RM), Initiation Move (IM), Response Move + Initiation Move (RMIM), No Answer (N/A) and Unmatch (UM)¹⁷. A relation of the combination of both classifications can be observed in Figure 7.

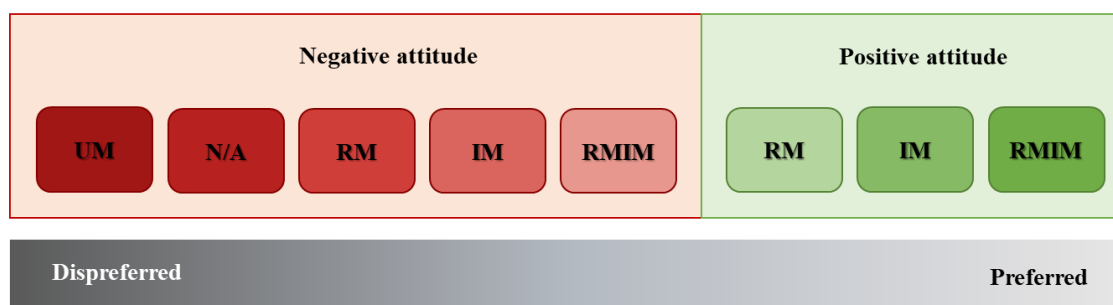


Figure 7. Classification in terms of attitude, CA and level of preference.

In order to learn what the most extended linguistic practices were, Herbert's taxonomy of compliment responses (1986) was applied.

The first difference with Herbert's classification is the fact that the category of "Comment History" was used to collect, not only the examples in which women provided some extra information but also all those instances in which women resorted to appropriation (del-Teso-Cravioto, 2006) in order to construct their responses by alluding to the same

¹⁷ N/A was used to instantiate those moments in which the person did not reply; contrastingly, UM referred to those instances in which one of the parties decided to break communication by unmatching the other person which prevented any further communication among them.

reference or metaphorical expression used in the CO. Due to the nature of the COs, many people included questions in their answers; however, they were not of the same nature as the ones considered by Herbert (1986) since, with the possible exception of two only examples (“*En serio?*”[Really?]) and “Was it really?”) they did not seek reaffirmation but were genuine questions for information (unless women were being ironic when they uttered this responses, in which case no answers of this type would have been found at all). Consequently, the category of “Questions” was relocated in the subgroup “Other Interpretations” and included all those instances in which women asked men questions; nevertheless, it should be noticed that, if a particular instance could be placed in another category apart from the one of “Other interpretation- questions”, the other categories were given priority and only the ones which were composed by one or more questions were grouped into this category.

Moreover, the category of “Reassignment” encompassed all responses in which the addressee shifted but also those moments in which women replaced themselves with any other entity or topic as the focus of the conversation. Within the category of “Qualification” were included all those responses which made a negative comment in regard to the CO. Finally, the category of “Other Interpretations-Requests” was broadened so as to include invitations and offers.

Furthermore, the fact that the sample was not very big caused some categories to be represented by only a few examples. In order to solve this issue, only the macro-categories (that is, “Agreement- acceptance”, “Agreement- comment history”, “Agreement- transfer”, “Non agreement- scale down”, “Non agreement- no acceptance”, “Non agreement- no acknowledgement”, “Other interpretations- invitation/ offer/ request” and “Other interpretations-question”) were addressed.

To summarize, in order to assess which COs were more likely to generate a positive or negative response from female Tinder users and the shape that this answers were more likely to take, five COs; namely, CO1: Hey, “CO3: Intelligent”, “CO7: Titanic” (which were expected to collect more positive feedback), “CO6: Roses” and “CO8: Stem” (which were more likely to be bad regarded) were analysed. The reasoning behind the choice of these five COs lies in the fact that even if “CO: Hey!” and “CO3: Intelligent”, the two which had been appointed as the least preferred ones; namely “CO8: Stem” and “CO6: Roses”, and CO7: Titanic, which had come second in the final ranking but whose votes were mostly scattered between the first, second and third positions when looking at the

interviewees’ responses. The following figure summarized the method followed to conduct the investigation.

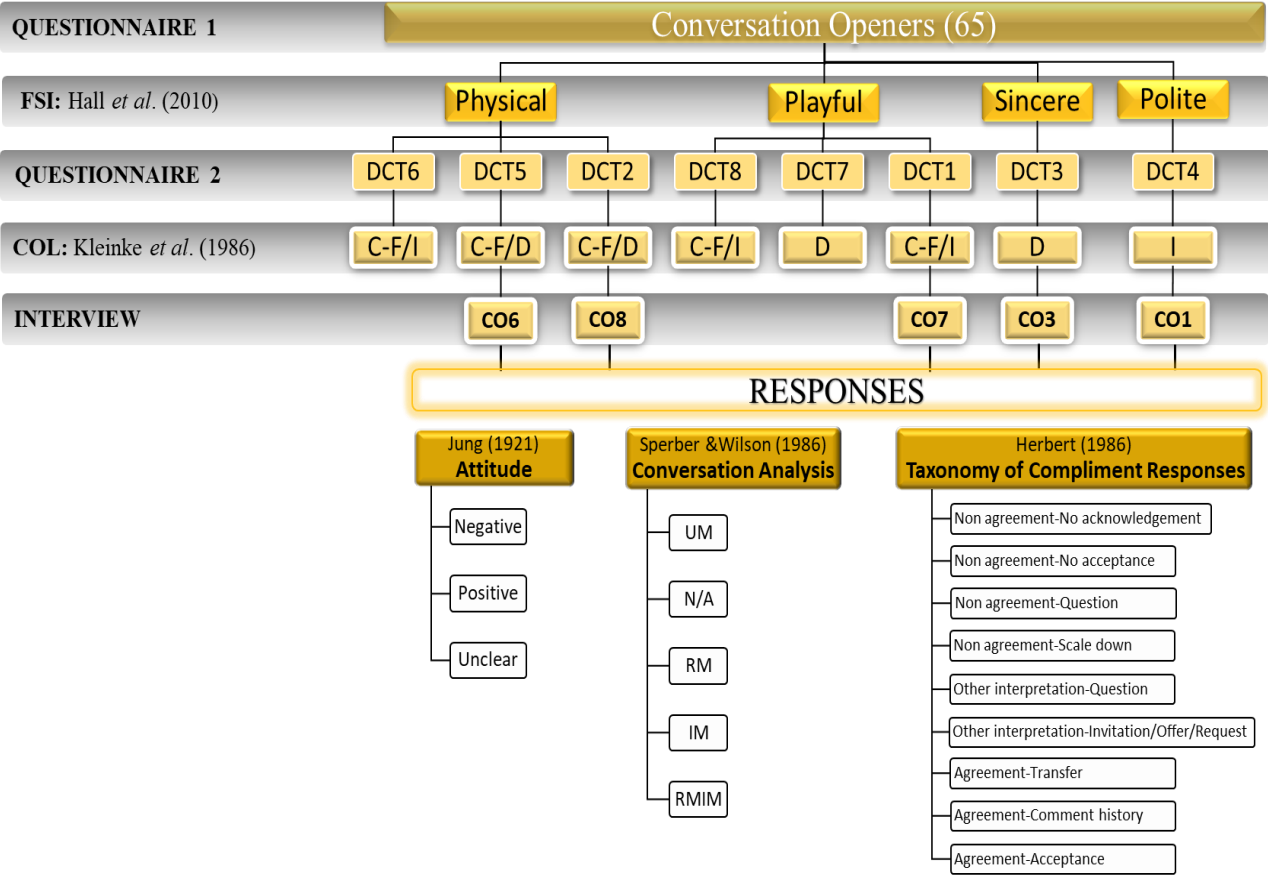


Figure 8. Experimental design utilised in the present study.¹⁸

¹⁸ CO: Conversation Opener; FSI: Flirting Styles Inventory; DCT: Discourse Completion Task; COL: Classification of Opening Lines; C-F: Cute-Flippant; I: Indirect; D: Direct; RMIM: Response Move and Initiation move; IM: Initiation Move; RM: Response Move; N/A: No Answer; UM: Unmatch.

4. Results and Discussion

The aim of this section is to put forward and discuss the most relevant results collected by means of the interviews and questionnaires and analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively for the purpose of this study. In order to facilitate the reading process, this section has been designed in such a way that each subsection provides information in the line of one of the research questions formulated in the Introduction.

First, the linguistic features of the five conversation openers according to Kleinke *et al.* (1986) and Hall *et al.* (2010) will be presented. Then, women's reactions and linguistic behaviour from the perspective of Jung (1921) and Ajzen (1989)'s concept of attitude, CA, and Herbert's classification of compliment response (1986) will be explored. Finally, the differences and similarities between the data collected in Spanish and that gathered in English will be studied.

4.1. Approaching women on Tinder: features of conversation openers

The five COs were studied linguistically and then organized based on two different categorisations: Kleinke *et al.*'s classification of opening lines (1986) and Hall *et al.*'s Flirting Styles Inventory (2010). In regard to the nomenclature chosen to designate each of the five COs, it should be noted that the COs are not consecutively numbered because, as it has already been explained in the Method Section, there was originally a total number of eight COs, out of which five were selected as a result of women's preferences expressed in the interview, namely, the two most popular (and less explicit ones), the two least preferred (and most explicit) and a last one whose preference and explicitness was less clear to the interviewees. Figure 9 displays the total values awarded to each of the COs by the interviewees (each of the women ordered the COs from 1 to 8; 1=least preferred, 8=most preferred) and it shows that, in terms of preference, of the five COs which were studied, the top of the ranking was occupied by "CO1: Hey!", closely followed by "CO7: Titanic", and with a slightly greater gap, "CO4: Pizza" and "CO3: Intelligent". Meanwhile, the most dispreferred strategy was "CO8: Stem", followed by "CO2: Horses" and "CO6: Roses".

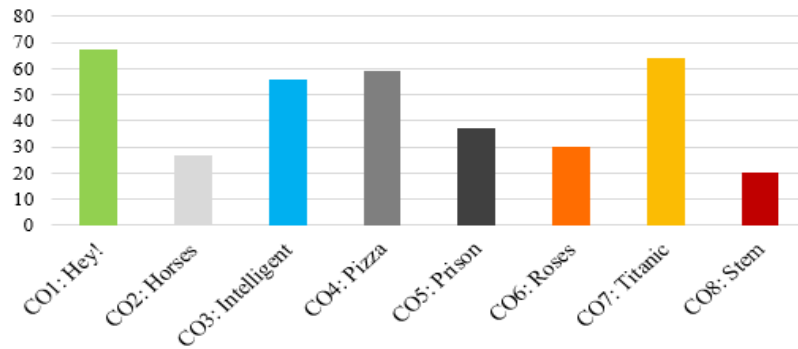


Figure 9. Interviewee's preferences of COs.

In this investigation, “CO4: Pizza”, “CO2: Horses” and “CO5: Prison” have been disregarded due to space constraints and because it was believed that the remaining five COs would be representative enough (“CO1: Hey!”, “CO3: Intelligent” and “CO7: Titanic” as the motivators of preferred answers, and “CO6: Roses” and “CO8: Stem” of dispreferred ones).

Moreover, in order to facilitate the reader's identification of each CO throughout the whole section, a key word obtained from the linguistic realisation of the CO itself will be included, together with its number, to help the reader identify each CO, as can be found in Figure 10.

Tienes cara de ser super inteligente! Y encima estudias X! Yo no sería capaz...	CO3: Intelligent
You must be super intelligent! And you are studying I couldn't if I tried	
Hola!	CO1: Hey!
Hey!	
Titanic. Lo siento, necesitaba decir algo que rompiera el hielo	CO7: Titanic
Titanic. Sorry, that was a bad icebreaker	
Oye, esos pantalones no serán 10% algodón, 90% ácido giberélico? Porque llevo un rato mirándolos y estoy experimentando un importante alargamiento de tallo	CO8: Stem
Are those trousers made of gibberellic acid? Because it's promoting elongation of my stem	
Las rosas son preciosas, las violetas están bien. Si tú eres el nueve, yo me pido ser el seis	CO6: Roses
Roses are gorgeous. Violets are fine. How about you be the six, and I'll be the nine?	

Figure 10. Studied COs and keywords.

4.1.1. Linguistic analysis of COs

Before proceeding to comment what are the preferred and dispreferred COs, a small linguistic analysis of each of the COs will be presented. In this manner, it will be easier to present the possible reasons which might have led women to react as they did. The order in which they have been presented is the same which will be utilized in subsequent sections and was decided post-analysis based on the number of preferred answers obtained for each CO.

4.1.1.1. Linguistic analysis of “CO3: Intelligent”

CO3 was utilised to design DCT3. The original CO had been gathered in Spanish and was: “*Tienes cara de ser super inteligente! Y encima estudias X! Yo no sería capaz...*”, then, it was translated into English as “You must be super intelligent! And you are studying X I couldn’t if I tried”.

This CO was constituted by a compliment with an intensifier (“*Tienes cara de ser super inteligente!*” / “You must be super intelligent!”), a personal reference (“*Y encima estudias [X]!*” / “And you are studying [X]”) and a self-derogative comment (“*Yo no sería capaz...*” / “I couldn’t if I tried”). The combination of these three utterances was probably to be intended to please the other person as a result of the application of Leech’s approbation and modesty maxims (1983) by maximising praise to the other, and self-deprecating one’s self (maximising dispraise to the self).

In other words, CO3 was constituted by a compliment related to the other person’s intellect (rather than her physical appearance), it was personal, since it made reference to a piece of information present in her profile. As it did not include any evident sexual explicatures or implicatures, this CO could be interpreted as a sign of interest showing that the man had not simply swiped right after seeing the pictures but that he had taken the time to read the information in the bio section. According to the interviewees’ opinion, this CO was the second most preferred one and, consequently, very likely to generate positive preferred responses when utilised by men in Tinder. This may be due to the fact that, traditionally, women have been more used to complimenting (and being complimented) on their looks rather than on their intellect, while men have been more likely to favour compliments on their accomplishments or wit (Holmes, 1988; Miles and Yanguen, 1991; Miles, 1994; Park *et al.*, 2015)). However, in the last decades, currents such as feminism have propitiated a balancing of this situation: nowadays, as reported by

Rees-Miller (2011), both men and women seem to value compliments on performance (i.e. “that was a very smart thing to say”) over any other type of compliments.

In addition, by finishing the CO with a self-deprecating comment, the speaker was creating an intellectual imbalance between them. This behaviour was rare since, as reported by Lora *et al.* (2015), men, in practice, do not tend to feel comfortable flirting with women whom they consider more intelligent. Consequently, the oddness of this disequilibrium made women feel uncomfortable, and caused them to attempt at balancing out the intellectual difference by consoling him, as can be seen in examples (1) and (2):

- (1) *¡todo [sic] tiene su dificultad! seguro que [y] también tiene miga!* [Everything has its difficulties! I’m sure [y] is not that easy either!]
- (2) Not everyone has to, I bet you have other talents... and thank you btw for the compliment!

Others opted to contradict and encourage the interlocutor, as seen in examples (3) and (4):

- (3) *Cada uno es capaz de lo que cree poder! Dale que se puede ponele [sic] garra* [Everyone is capable of what they believe they can do! Go on, you can do it!]
- (4) Naah everyone can, its[sic] just a matter of finding what you like

And some resorted to the use of self-deprecating comments, as in examples (5) and (6):

- (5) *Es por las gafas jajaja. Bueno, en realidad no es tan difícil.* [It’s just the glasses hahaha. Well, in fairness, it’s not that hard]
- (6) Definitely not, I just about get by!

In Section 4.2. some further evidence justifying these reactions will be provided.

4.1.1.2. Linguistic analysis of “CO1: Hey!”

CO1 was used to create DCT1. This was such a common CO that instances of it had been collected in both languages with some variation in terms of vowel elongation, use of emojis, use of exclamation marks, etc. However, in order to avoid too much divergence, “Hey!” constituted the English CO and “*Hola!*” was used for the Spanish one. This was

the simplest CO of the ones examined in this investigation. It consisted of an informal greeting expressed in an exclamative tone (“*Hola!*” / “Hey!”). The informality of this greeting was accomplished by different means in English and Spanish:

On the one hand, in English, the greeting “hey” was used instead of the more traditional “hello”, showing, as reported by Tanaka (1988), familiarity and, consequently, appealing to the respondent’s positive face. On the other hand, in the case of Spanish, a nonconventional greeting (i.e. *holi*, *holita*, *holiwi*, etc.) could have been used following Benito and Estrada’s (2015) claim that the practice of adding the suffix “-i” to words (i.e. “*holi*” instead of “*hola*”[hello]; “*besi*” instead of “*beso*”[kiss]) had the intention of creating colloquialisms. Nevertheless, it was decided that this familiarity ought to be established by other means since these practices could be linked to certain sociolects (such as those of women and male homosexuals) and the profiles which presumably started the conversational exchange belonged to men sexually attracted to women. Consequently, it was decided that it was less problematic to resort to other factors, such as punctuation. In Spanish, as explained by the *Real Academia Española* (Royal Academy of the Spanish Language) in order to provide a word with an exclamative tone, two exclamation marks are needed, an opening, and a closing one¹⁹. However, in the last few years, globalisation and the influence from other languages have resulted in a loss of the opening exclamation mark, particularly among the younger segments (see Rodríguez-González, 2002; Fischer, 2008; Bouwan, 2017) of the population and in digital interaction (González-Varela, 2017), which is often associated to digital communication and juvenile interaction. Therefore, it was decided that it would be more effective, context-bound and similar in meaning to the English version to formulate the CO in Spanish as: “*Hola!*”

4.1.1.3. Linguistic analysis of “CO7: Titanic”

CO7 was used in order to formulate DCT1. It had been originally provided in English as: “Titanic. Sorry, that was a bad icebreaker”. Then, it was translated into Spanish: “Titanic. Lo siento, necesitaba decir algo que rompiera el hielo”.

This CO was formed by a noun phrase functioning as a statement (“Titanic”) followed by an apology (“Sorry” / “*Lo siento*”) and, a justification in the case of Spanish (“*necesitaba decir algo que rompiera el hielo*” [I had to say something that would break

¹⁹ Retrieved on August 14 2020 from: <https://www.rae.es/consultas/ortografia-de-los-signos-de-interrogacion-y-exclamacion>

the ice]], or a self-deprecatory comment in the case of English (“that was a bad icebreaker”). It was intended to produce a jocular reaction in the receiver of the message derived from the wordplay. This type of CO, as explained by Cai *et al.* (2019), is often defined as “bad jokes” and generally regarded as funny by society.

However, it is possible that this type of CO might be considered as too *cliché* or unelaborated by some women, resulting in a lower success rate. Moreover, though apparently “CO7: Titanic” did not include any sexual explicatures²⁰, some people were able to identify certain implicatures²¹ in connection to some romantic scenes in the 1997 film “Titanic”, as can be seen in example 7 (in the film, the main female character, Rose, asks the main male character, Jack to “draw her like one of his French ladies” or, what is the same, lying on a couch wearing nothing but a diamond necklace):

(7) *Píntame como a una de tus mujeres francesas* [Draw me like one of your French ladies]

This association could be interpreted positively or negatively but, in the case of the latter, as explained above, the fact that the CO included an apology might have had the potential to act as a mitigator, causing the message to be received under a more positive light.

4.1.1.4. Linguistic analysis of “CO8: Stem”

DCT2 was elaborated on the basis of “CO8: Stem”. The original utterance had been collected in English and was: “Are those trousers made of gibberellic acid? Because it’s promoting elongation of my stem”. It was then translated into Spanish as “*Oye, esos pantalones que llevas no serán 10% algodón, 90% ácido giberélico? Porque llevo un rato mirándolos y estoy empezando a sentir un importante alargamiento de tallo*”.

As can be observed, this CO took the form of a rhetorical question (“*Oye, esos pantalones que llevas en la segunda foto no serán 10% algodón, 90% ácido giberélico?*” / “Are those trousers made of gibberellic acid?”) and was followed by a justification and a metaphorical reference to the male genitals (“*Porque llevo un rato mirándolos y estoy*

²⁰ According to Sperber and Wilson (1986), explicatures refer to the meaning, which is logically embedded in the utterance, that is, its literal meaning.

²¹ According to Sperber and Wilson (1986), implicature refers to the meaning which is conveyed by some utterances but is not explicitly specified

empezando a sentir un importante alargamiento de tallo” / “Because it’s promoting elongation of my stem”). It was enunciated with a jocular intention and it resorted to science to formulate a metaphor for the male genitals.

This CO communicated a great number of sexual implicatures such as ‘Looking at your picture is turning me on’, ‘I am interested in sexting’, ‘I am smart and I think you are smart and hot’²², etc. Nonetheless, the fact that it resorted to science to make a sexual reference might have mitigated the impact of the comment, providing a variety of opportunities of response for the receiver of the message (i.e. connections with the man’s career choice, continuing the pun, etc.). In this case, flouting Grice’s maxim of relevance played to the initiator’s advantage: if the sexual reference was not understood or was simply ignored (which did not seem to be the case in most answers collected but remains a possibility), the female subject could ask for clarification or ignore the confusing comment and make an IM with reference to science (in fact, this strategy was also used by those subjects who did understand the message but would not acknowledge it).

In addition, for those women who understood the sexual reference, it provided an unusual context which was used to continue the flirtatious interaction, if they were pleased by the CO, or to reject the person if they disliked it (see section 4.2.).

4.1.1.5. Linguistic analysis of “CO6: Roses”

DCT5 was designed on the basis of CO6. This CO was collected in its English version “Roses are gorgeous. Violets are fine. How about you be the six, and I’ll be the nine?” and was then adapted to “*Las rosas son preciosas, las violetas están bien. Si tú eres el nueve, yo me pido ser el seis*”.

This CO was created by modifying a classic children’s rhyming poem²³ (belonging to the Anglo-Saxon culture) and introducing certain sexual connotations in it. The CO begins with two assertions (“Roses are gorgeous. Violets are fine” / “*Las rosas son preciosas, las violetas están bien.*”), followed by an invitation to sexual interaction (that is, to get in the 69 position). Nonetheless, this invitation was formulated differently in English and Spanish. First, in the English version, the following sentence was shaped as an offering (“How about you be the six, and I’ll be the nine?”) while in the Spanish one,

²² Note that, in this case, single quotation marks were used, this is to mark that this are not answers provided by the participants, but possible interpretations of the utterance.

²³ “Roses are red, violets are blue, sugar is sweet and so are you”

it was formulated as expressing the consequences of the previous condition (“*si tú eres el nueve, yo me pido ser el seis*”[if you are number nine I would like to be number six]). Moreover, it should be noted that this formula had been regarded as mostly implicit by the interviewees. This interpretation was shared by a number of the female respondents and, even if, as commented by some of the women, it would be best if people were not graded, as seen in example (8):

(8) *Prefiero que no seamos números, lo siento* [I’m sorry but I’d rather we weren’t numbers]

This CO would have probably been more effective if the numbers had been allocated differently: the woman being awarded a nine and the man self-denominating himself as a six, preventing responses such as example (9):

(9) Baby, I’m the 9... but I don’t think you could even be a 6, bad flirting skills.

Moreover, “CO6: Roses” is formulated as an invitation (i.e. a request) which is considered face-threatening by nature. In this case, in which what is being asked from the hearer is her willingness to take part in a sexual practice, this attribute is even more intensified. In addition, the employment of this CO was a risky strategy since it does not provide any further contextual information which could be used by the receiver to elaborate an answer other than the poem itself (which could be modified, by means of appropriation, to take the form of a witty reply) as in examples (10) and (11):

(10) *Las rosas son rojas, las violetas están bien, si quieres echar un polvo, invítame antes a un café* [Roses are red, violets are nice, if you want to fuck, let’s grab some coffee first]

(11) Roses are red, violets are blue, buy me something nice, and well [sic] maybe talk it out.

4.1.2. Kleinke *et al.*’s classification of opening lines (1986)

The COs used in this investigation were classified as direct, innocuous or cute-flippant, following Kleinke *et al.*’s (1986) categorisation, as illustrated by Figure 11.

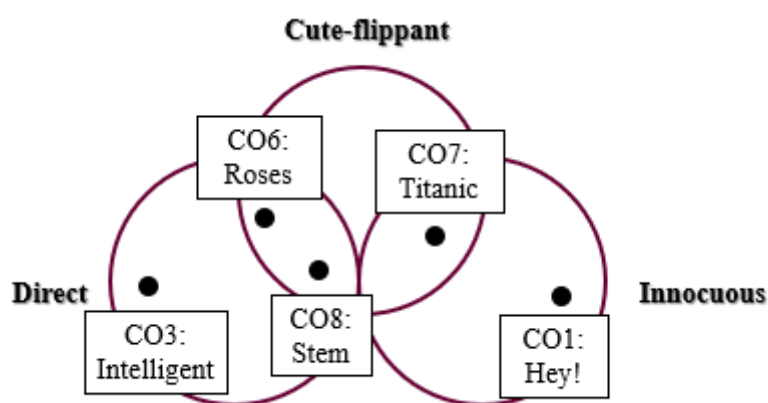


Figure 11. Classification of COs according to Kleinke *et al.*'s classification of opening lines (1986).

In spite of the fact that Kleinke *et al.* (1986) proposed these categories as closed, it was observed that, when analysing the selected COs, three of them did not completely fall within one category but could be said to have attributes which placed them in two. This was the case of “CO6: Roses”, “CO8: Stem”, and “CO7: Titanic”. These three COs contained attributes typical of cute-flippant COs since they were “humorous remarks” which, to a bigger or lesser extent, included sexual references (see “CO6: Roses”’ mention of the 69 sexual position and “CO8: Stem”’s metaphorical comment about his penis) or “invitations to further interaction” (see “CO7: Titanic”’s mention of ice breaking which implies an interest in continuing the conversation). However, in terms of directness, “CO6: Roses”, and “CO8: Stem” were more direct than “CO7: Titanic”, which was more innocuous.

Therefore, the three of them could be classified as cute-flippant and, therefore, probably among the least preferred COs, since, as studied by Kleinke *et al.* (1986) and later by Geher and Kaufman (2012), cute-flippant COs like these ones are sometimes interpreted by women as unintelligent since they do not require much cognitive effort to process. In other words, in flirtatious interaction, going against Sperber and Wilson’s principle of relevance or, what is described by Grice (1991) as flouting the maxim of relevance, is seen as attractive by women. Further studies might need to be conducted in order to study this phenomenon in greater depth and to see its possible connections to the incongruity-resolution pattern (see Yus-Ramos, 2017b, for further information in the matter). Additionally, cute-flippant opening lines have a tendency to become *cliché*-like expressions. In Tinder, an app in which women are contacted daily by several men, when they are repeatedly approached by means of the same expressions, their behaviour

towards them may worsen. Nonetheless, it must be considered that, as explained by Devito (2012) and Gamble and Gamble (2019), cute-flippant COs are the least preferred opening lines by both men and women, so men are not likely to abuse of this type of COs. Notwithstanding, these studies were conducted in relation to face-to-face exchanges in environments in which people were not necessarily looking to engage in flirtatious interaction. Contrastingly, in apps such as Tinder, the use of cute-flippant COs is sometimes perceived as positive since it might be interpreted as a sign of interest, search for originality and effort, which would result in women being less critical.

Nonetheless, in general terms, it would be expected that innocuous COs, such as “CO1: Hey!”, would turn out to be less problematic and most likely to be preferred by women, as explained in the 2019 BBC article “Why being ‘boring’ on Tinder could get you more dates”²⁴ even if, as reported by several webpages giving advice on Tinder,²⁵ men often find that when they start a conversation with a greeting such as ‘hey’, ‘how are you?’ or ‘How was your day?’, their messages are often left unanswered. This might be a consequence of the high number of matches women tend to get. This type of answers, though apparently preferred in form, are more likely to go unnoticed.

Based on the work of Kleinke *et al.* (1986), Cunningham (1989) and Cunningham and Barbee (2008), it can be said that, in face-to-face interactions, women often preferred more direct approaches over cute-flippant or innocuous ones. In Tinder, women seemed to behave similarly and “CO3: Intelligent” (a direct and sincere CO) turned out to be the most popular one. However, the combination of direct and cute-flippant attributes in COs did not prove too effective based on the results of this study.

4.1.3. Hall *et al.*’s Flirting Styles Inventory (2010).

Hall *et al.*’s (1986) classification was constituted by five categories (Traditional, Sincere, Polite, Playful and Physical) but, as it has already been explained in the methodology section, due to the nature of the experiment, the category of Traditional opening lines was disregarded and the COs used in this study were classified in the remaining four categories.

²⁴ Retrieved from on July 20, 2020 from: <https://bbc.co.uk/bbcthree/article/f0227-446c-a8dc-bfeb75a2ccd0/>

²⁵ See: <https://tinderseduction.com/how-to-start-a-tinder-conversation/>
<https://www.quora.com/Every-time-I-sent-a-simple-Hi-to-my-Tinder-matches-they-either-unliked-me-or-not-respond-How-can-I-get-them-to-respond/>

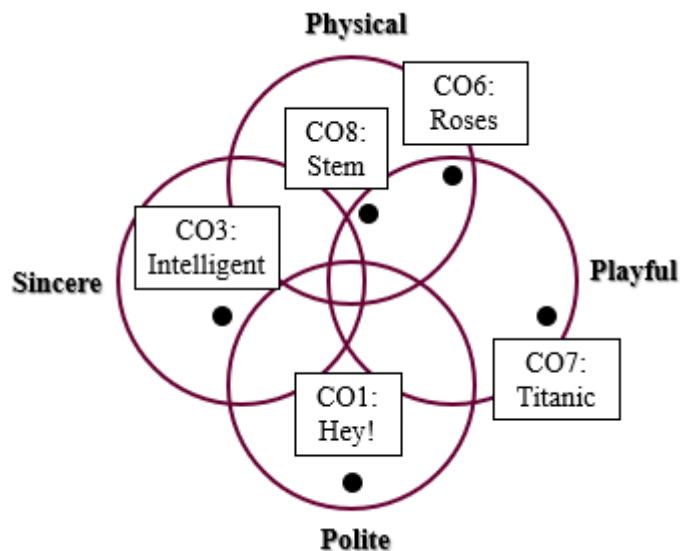


Figure 12. Classification of COs according to Hall *et al.*'s Flirting Styles Inventory (2010).

In the case of Hall *et al.*'s FSI, as in that of Kleinke *et al.*'s one, some COs included certain characteristics from more than one group. This was particularly the case of "CO6: Roses" and "CO8: Stem", which could be placed either in the playful or the physical categories, while the other three COs very clearly belonged within just one group: "CO3: Intelligent" was an example of the sincere flirting style, "CO1: Hey!" illustrated polite flirting techniques and "CO7: Titanic" exemplified a playful flirtatious approach. In this case, and due to the similarities between the playful flirting style and cute-flippant COs, this was another characteristic which played against "CO6: Roses", "CO8: Stem", and "CO7: Titanic's" popularity. Despite the nature of the app (which is commonly known to be used to arrange casual sex) and the fact that these COs are likely to be formulated in a jocular tone by resorting to mock politeness (see Haugh, 2012), physical flirting approaches might, at times, be interpreted as extremely face-threatening cases of sexual harassment which would make women react negatively to them.

Additionally, sincere COs such as "CO3: Intelligent", appeared to be best regarded by the female participants because they were perceived as showing a genuine interest for the other person since the focus was set on a piece of information which was presumably important to the woman (i.e. career choice) and shows their admiration for it. Finally, polite COs such as "CO1: Hey!" were not likely to turn out as problematic but were also not likely to generate preferred responses.

4.2. Women's linguistic behaviour towards conversation starters

In order to establish which were the COs which generated a greater number of preferred responses, the answers uttered by the participants were analysed first in terms of the attitude they showed (either positive or negative); then, from the perspective of CA; and, finally, following an adapted version of Herbert's classification of compliment responses (1986). In this manner, the five COs were classified into two subgroups: one constituted by the three COs which had received the highest percentages of preferred responses (which coincided with the ones pinpointed by the interviewees, even if the order slightly differed), namely "CO3: Intelligent", "CO1: Hey!" and "CO7: Titanic"; and another one conformed by those which had a higher chance of generating a dispreferred response, namely "CO6: Roses" and "CO8: Stem".

When looking at the answers provided by the interviewees, it was observed that, in all cases, the participants seemed to differ in the order of preference (see Figure X. A). Nonetheless, it was possible to establish a ranking in terms of preference based on the interviewees' opinions (see figure X. B). This result can be interpreted as an indication that, when looking at the responses to the COs, it was very likely that a certain level of variation would be observed within each of the COs.

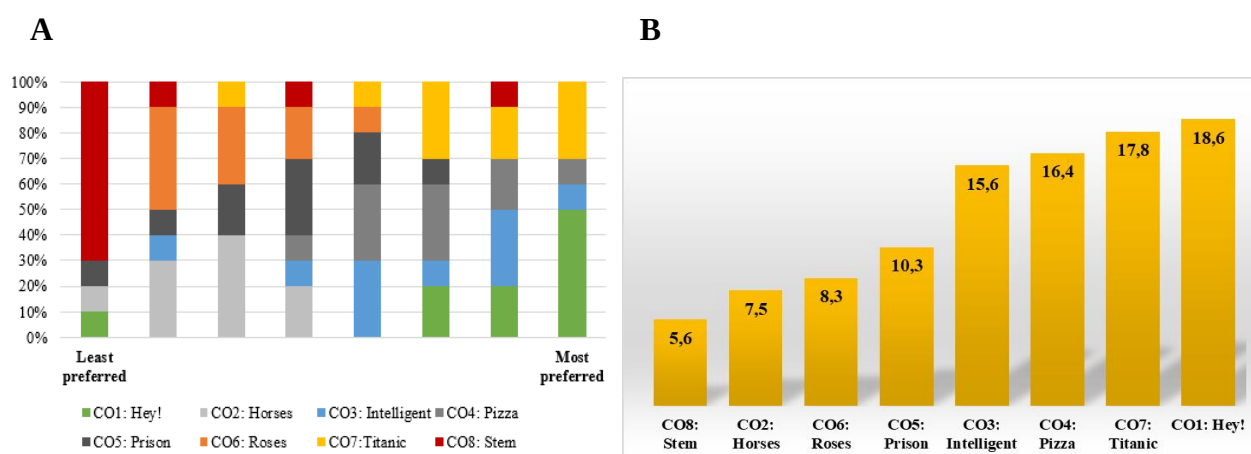


Figure 13A. COs ordered in terms of the interviewee's preferences. **13B.** Ranking of COs from the least preferred to the most preferred.

The figure shows that 60% of the interviewees placed CO1: Hey! as the most preferred CO. However, participants were less consistent in their choice of the second most preferred CO, being "CO7: Titanic", "CO1: Hey!" and "CO4: Pizza" tied in second place

by just a difference of 10% from “CO3: Intelligent”, which had been the most recurrent choice (voted by 30% of the participants). Then, the least preferred COs were examined, and it was gathered that 70% of the interviewees claimed “CO8: Stem” for the last position in the ranking. Meanwhile, 50% of the respondents had placed “CO6: Roses” in the second-to-last position.

In consequence, in terms of preference, of the five COs which were studied, the top of the ranking was occupied by “CO1: Hey!”, closely followed by “CO7: Titanic”, and with a slightly greater gap, “CO4: Pizza” and “CO3: Intelligent”. Meanwhile, the most dispreferred strategy was “CO8: Stem”, followed by “CO2: Horses” and “CO6: Roses”.

Even if not completely (“CO3: Intelligent” and “CO7: Titanic” were interchanged and “CO4: Pizza” was scattered among the preferred places in the ranking despite it not being the mode of any), this data tallies with the modes, which was the factor which determined which COs had been selected for the analysis (and the main reason why CO4: Pizza was not studied despite its positive feedback).

In fact, when looking at the levels of explicitness reported by the interviewees, it was observed that, in general, those COs which were seen as most explicit were also regarded as the most dispreferred while those which seemed less explicit (or most implicit) were the preferred ones.

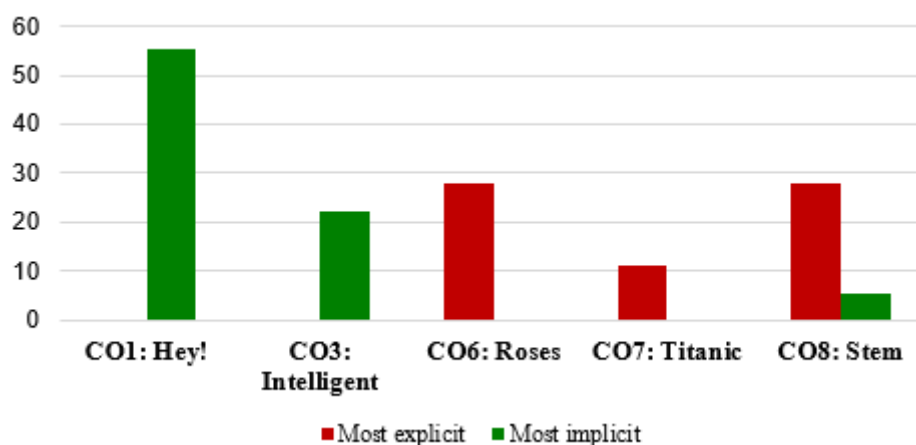


Figure 14. Interviewees’ perception of explicitness and implicitness.

It is particularly noticeable that 55.5% of the participants identified “CO1: Hey!” as the less explicit. Then, both “CO6: Roses” and “CO8: Stem” were regarded as the most explicit by the same percentage of the participants (27.8%) even if the latter was also

perceived as the least explicit by a small percentage of the interviewees (5.5%). This contradiction might be due to the fact that this CO does not actually contain any explicit sexual content (as “CO6: Roses”, which explicitly mentions de 69 sexual position). However, the figurative sexual interpretation ought to be inferred from the metaphor and this might not be achieved by all respondents.

In the case of “CO7: Titanic”, it can be said that the opposite phenomenon took place. Even if, apparently, no explicit meaning was perceived, 11,1% of the participants disagreed and identified this CO as explicit. This was not only a perception of the interviewees but it was backed by some of the responses obtained from the questionnaire which show that the idea of ice breaking (or melting) conveyed by the utterance can be interpreted as a metaphorical conceptualisation of the mapping “Rise in body temperature is passion” (see Kövecses, 2000; Goatley, 2007) and triggered flirtatious answers like examples (12) and (13):

(12) *jajajaja No solo lo has roto, también lo has derretido. You are so Hot!!* [hahahaha you didn't just break it, you melt it. You are so Hot!!]

(13) Yeah, it was bad, I hope you[sic] jokes are better in bed, because I want you to break me

Despite the fact that “CO3: Intelligent” was chosen by 22.2% of the interviewees as the least explicit, it was interpreted in multiple manners by the questionnaire respondents. Some women interpreted that, by formulating the CO in this manner, these men were living an easy life (not studying or working) and were somehow proud of it, as in examples (14) and (15):

(14): *Eres un nini?* [Are you a good for nothing or what?]

(15): That says a lot about you

In addition, others interpreted that this CO might have some type of sexual implicature and responded to it consequently, as can be observed in examples (16) and (17):

(16) *Crees que serías capaz de estudiar mi anatomía?* [Do you think you could try and study my anatomy?]

(17) I just do it when I'm bored or alone, I could study you.

The next subsections will analyse the most frequent behaviour of women when faced with this type of COs interacting through apps such as Tinder. First, the comments in regard to those COs which were designated as the most preferred (or most popular) will be explained, followed by those of the most dispreferred (or most unpopular).

4.2.1. Women's positive reactions through language

In this subsection, the linguistic behaviour of women approached by means of the three preferred COs; namely, "CO3: Intelligent", "CO1: Hey!", and "CO7: Titanic" will be explored and discussed. Throughout this section, the possible reasons behind these preferences will be addressed after conducting the analysis of the collected answers.

To begin with, the attitude shown by the respondents when presented with these COs will be studied. Attitude of response, as has been explained in the theoretical background, is a complex concept which, in this study, will be utilised in close connection with the idea of preference, which was postulated by Sacks (1987) and later further studied by other scholars (Grice, 1975; Levinson, 1983; see Bilmes, 1988) and has been applied in this analysis as that answer which would ideally be expected in response to the CO. In the case of attitude, it would be preferred that women showed a positive attitude and that they responded with a preferred sequence, since this would show a cooperative intention (see Grice, 1975 for further information on the Cooperative Principle) and, in these cases, it would be the first step towards becoming a complete preferred response. The other two factors which will influence the level of preference of the response are the type of response according to CA and that based on Herbert's taxonomy of compliment response which will be looked into later in this section.

Figure 15 contains the percentages of answers which were uttered with a positive or negative attitude. Those answers whose attitude was not clear have not been taken into consideration in the analysis.

%		Negative attitude	Positive Attitude	Unclear Attitude
CO3: Intelligent	T _{SP}	6.0	79.8	14.3
	T _{EN}	7.8	68.6	23.5
CO1: Hey!	T _{SP}	4.8	94.0	1.2
	T _{EN}	5.9	92.2	2.0
CO7: Titanic	T _{SP}	12.0	63.1	25.0
	T _{EN}	19.7	58.8	21.6

Figure 15. Attitude of responses to the most preferred COs: “CO3: Intelligent”, “CO1: Hey!” and “CO7: Titanic”.²⁶

These three COs were characterised for having high rates of answers uttered with a positive attitude (POSAT henceforth) and a low number of responses produced with a negative attitude (NEGAT henceforth). Nonetheless, small differences can be observed among the situations and the data collected in English and Spanish. The latter issue will be commented upon more thoroughly in the next section, but some possible interpretations of the intergroup variation will be provided hereafter.

The χ^2 results show no statistically significant variation between the attitude shown to the three COs even if, a tendency can be observed in which “CO1: Hey!” received a higher number of POSAT responses (94.0% in Spanish and 92.2% in English) than “CO3: Intelligent” (79.8% in Spanish and 68.6% in English) and, even more evidently, than “CO7: Titanic” (63.1% in Spanish and 58.8% in English). Additionally, it was noticed that “CO3: Intelligent” and “CO1: Hey!” had specially low percentages of NEGAT responses (not reaching 10% of the total sample in any of the cases) while this was the attitude shown by a slightly greater number of women in response to “CO7: Titanic” (12.0% in Spanish and 19.7% in English). These results were, again, not statistically significant according to the Chi Square test (χ^2) but a tendency was identified and showed that the usage of “CO7: Titanic” was more likely to result in NEGAT answers than when resorting to “CO3: Intelligent” or “CO1: Hey!”

²⁶ T_{SP}: Total number of Spanish responses; T_{EN}: Total number of English responses

From the perspective of CA, when a turn is initiated, the preferred behaviour expected from the addressee is to complete the adjacency pair by producing the right type of second turn (i.e. greeting-greeting pair, question-answer, invitation-invitation acceptance, etc.). In the case of this study in which the purpose of the CO was to begin conversing with the other person in the hope of eventually arranging a face-to-face meeting, those answers which facilitated or accelerated that process were seen as preferred responses while those who diffculted or hampered the interaction were seen as least preferred. The figures below display the total amounts of unmatches (UM), no answers (N/A), response moves (RM), initiation moves (IM), and response move + initiation move (RMIM) in response to these three COs have been collected.

%		UM		N/A		RM		IM		RMIM	
		SP	EN	SP	EN	SP	EN	SP	EN	SP	EN
CO3: Intelligent	%	0.0	0.0	3.6	5.9	47.6	45.1	11.9	13.7	36.9	35.3
	N	0	0	3	3	40	23	10	7	31	18
Total_N		0		6		63		17		49	
CO1: Hey!	%	0.0	0.0	3.6	5.9	59.5	72.5	4.8	2.0	32.1	19.6
	N	0	0	3	3	50	37	4	1	27	10
Total_N		0		6		87		5		37	
CO7: Titanic	%	1.2	0.0	1.2	0.0	47.6	76.5	16.7	13.7	33.3	9.8
	N	1	0	1	0	40	39	14	7	28	5
Total_N		1		1		79		21		33	

Figure 15. Total number of unmatches (UM), no answers (N/A), response moves (RM), initiation moves (IM), and response move and initiation move (RMIM) in response to the preferred COs: “CO3: Intelligent”, “CO1: Hey!” and “CO7: Titanic”. ²⁷

In this case, not only the respective results collected in each of the languages but also the total number of results should be considered. As expected, since these were the best rated COs, the numbers of unmatches and no answers was fairly low, and no significant differences were observed between English and Spanish ($\chi^2=0.330$) in general terms, even

²⁷ N: Number of responses; Total_N: Total number of responses.

if the differences between Spanish and English POSAT answers proved significant ($\chi^2=0.004$). However, it is noticeable that, considering the total amounts, the most frequent type of answer to the three COs was the RM. This is interesting since, out of the three type of moves (RM, IM and RMIM), this was the most dispreferred considering that, when a person produces a response move, the adjacency pair is completed, and another turn should be started. This places the responsibility back in the initiator who has to make the effort to initiate another adjacency pair to maintain the conversation going.

Contrastingly, the IM was not a very frequent type of answer even if it was a more or less recurrent answer among the women who reacted to “CO3: Intelligent” and “CO7: Titanic”. A similar phenomenon, though in a smaller scale, was discovered when contrasting the RMIM results.

Considering that these three were the most popular COs among the female participants, and that significant differences were observed between their number of positive and negative responses ($\chi^2<0.001$), it would have been expected that they had shown a greater initiative to keep the conversation going. Even if Tinder sets a context designed to facilitate flirtatious interactions for its male and female users, the gender factor might need to be taken into consideration when discussing these findings (see Herbert, 1990). Mortensen (2017:595) found that “there is an overall tendency toward men initiating more general interaction and specifically flirtatious interaction”, though, as she argues, further investigations are needed in order to support her discoveries. This type of interaction is not that surprising considering the previous literature on the topic (see Scharlott and Christ, 1995; Kreager *et al.*, 2014; Xia *et al.*, 2014) but it is potentially risky for the success of the conversational exchange. Abramova *et al.* (2016:7) claimed that even if it is men who generally initiate the communicative exchange, they are also content with a superficial-like conversation; while women share a greater interest to carry on the communication. In consequence, a dichotomy is generated: in order for the interaction to be successful, in women’s eyes, men should show a greater communicative interest (that might be the reason why most women replied in such a passive manner, to check if men were interested enough that they would initiate the next conversational turn). However, men do not seem to be especially interested in engaging in long conversations since, as put forward by Tannen (1993), they are often more self-oriented and tend to use less rapport language, so they are likely to interpret women’s RMs as a lack of interest.

Furthermore, this backs up the theory that the preferred response in terms of CA ought to be shaped as a RMIM since it would satisfy both parties: on the one hand, the RM in

this interaction would reassure the man since it would let him know that his attempt at initiating a conversation has been felicitous (completion of the adjacency pair) and, on the other hand, the fact that women already initiated a new turn would facilitate men's next conversational exchange, inasmuch as showing interest in continuing the conversation, which would possibly result in men completing the new adjacency pair and maybe even beginning another conversational turn (note that further investigations are needed in order to prove the accuracy of this assumption, as this study solely considered the first two turns of conversational exchanges).

The differences between the three CO was, then, considered in order to establish which of the three was more likely to result in felicitous interaction. By looking at the total amounts, it can be seen that "CO3: Intelligent" had, in proportion, a higher number of RMIM answers than "CO1: Hey!" and "CO7: Titanic", even if, when looking at the respective responses collected in Spanish and English, no great differences were observed. Now, the results from the CA will be combined with those of attitude in order to see if there were any differences or the results remained consistent.

		Negative attitude					Positive attitude		
		UM	N/A	RM	IM	RMIM	RM	IM	RMIM
CO3: Intelligent	SP	0	3	0	1	1	34	3	30
	%	0	3,6	0	1,2	1,2	40,5	3,6	35,7
	EN	0	3	0	0	1	15	4	16
	%	0	5,9	0	0	2,0	31,4	7,8	31,4
CO1: Hey!	SP	0	3	0	1	0	49	3	27
	%	0	3,6	0	1,2	0	58,3	5,9	32,1
	EN	0	3	0	0	0	36	1	10
	%	0	5,9	0	0	0	70,6	2,0	19,6
CO7: Titanic	SP	1	1	1	3	4	27	6	21
	%	1,2	1,2	1,2	2,4	2,4	32,1	7,1	25,0
	EN	0	0	9	1	0	21	5	4
	%	0	0	17,6	2,0	0	41,2	9,8	7,8

Figure 16. Analysis in terms of attitude and CA of the preferred COs: "CO3: Intelligent", "CO1: Hey!" and "CO7: Titanic".

As it can be observed, no great differences are found when taking into consideration the factor of attitude since, these being the three most popular COs, the majority of answers were produced with a positive attitude. However, it is observed that “CO3: Intelligent” was the CO with the highest number of preferred responses (POSAT RMIMs) and with a greatest contrast between POSAT RMs and RMIMs. In the case of “CO3: Intelligent”, the difference between these two percentages is reduced (4.8% answers in Spanish and none in English); meanwhile, in “CO1: Hey!” (26.2% in the case of Spanish and 51.0% in that of English) and “CO7: Titanic” (7.1% the case of Spanish and 33.4% in that of English), the difference between RM and RMIM is much larger, with the exception of the Spanish speakers’ perception of “CO7: Titanic”.

These results suggest that women, in general, felt most motivated to make use of the most preferred type of answer when responding to “CO3: Intelligent” either in English or Spanish or to “CO7: Titanic” in Spanish. The case of “CO3: Intelligent” could be explained by considering the form of the CO, the fact that it includes a complement of a personal non-physical meaningful concept (her studies) together with the self-deprecatory comment has proven to be a very effective manner of designing a CO which would be replied to, but that the answers are likely to result in another conversational turn.

The case of “CO7: Titanic”, on the other hand, is more difficult to interpret since the high rate of RMIMs only occurred in the case of the Spanish responses; notwithstanding, this singularity will be covered in the next section.

Then, the results were studied with the aid of Herbert’s taxonomy (1986). Nonetheless, considering the small size of the sample which caused that some categories to be represented only by one or two instances, in order to compare the results obtained for each of the COs, the classification was simplified from twelve to eight categories in order to make the comparison process more meaningful. However, when looking at the answers to the COs individually, some aspects of the other categories might be mentioned.

The literature in regard to compliment responses is broad and several scholars have considered this phenomenon in the cases of Spanish (see Bustos-Rus, 2007; Siebold, 2008; Ramajo Cuesta, 2011) and English (Herbert, 1999; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001). Nevertheless, since not all the COs can be considered compliments, it is not too surprising that, at times, the results obtained from this investigation do not quite tally with those discovered in previous studies. However, it must be said that some of the results,

particularly those collected in response to “CO3: Intelligent”, the CO whose form most resembled that of compliments, match the expectations set by previous investigations.

The first and most noticeable feature which is common to the three COs is that not outstanding differences were observed between the responses in English and Spanish. Again, this issue will be commented in greater depth in the following section of the analysis. Taking this factor into account, the results obtained in both English and Spanish have been added up, as can be observed in Figure 17a and 17b, and will be analysed as constituents of the same only group of data in order to compare the reactions obtained to the different COs.

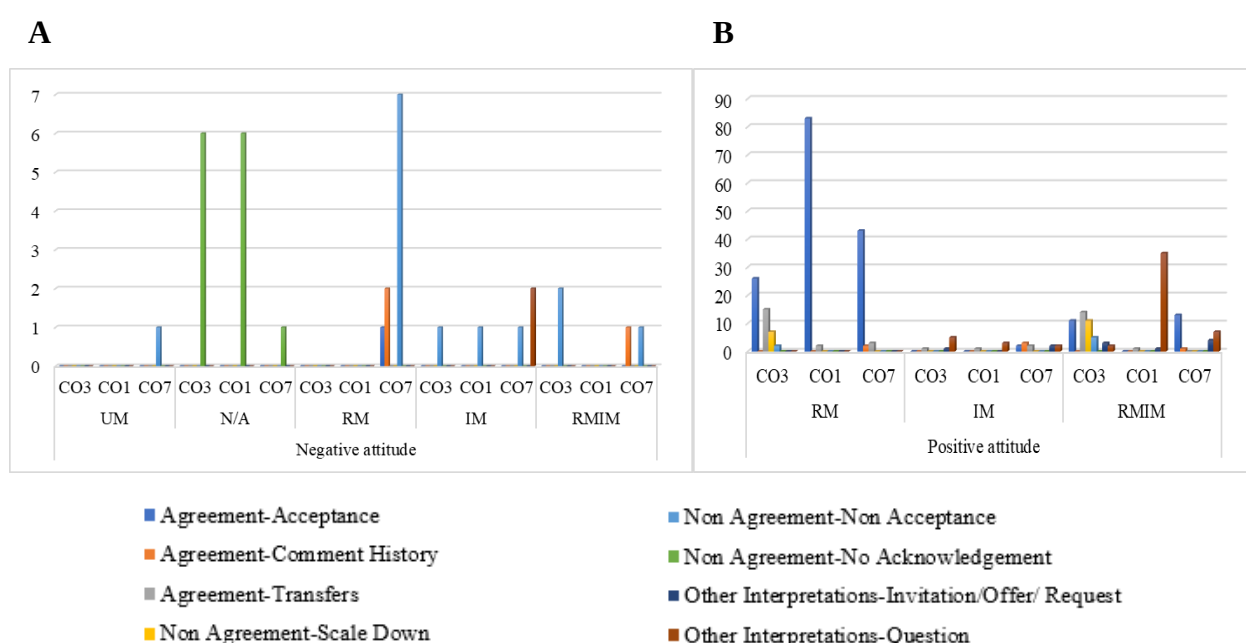


Figure 17A. Added values of English and Spanish of the categorisation of the NEGAT responses in terms of CA and Herbert’s taxonomy of compliment responses of the preferred COs: “CO3: Intelligent”, “CO1: Hey!” and “CO7: Titanic”. **17B.** Added values of English and Spanish of the categorisation of the POSAT responses in terms of CA and Herbert’s taxonomy of compliment responses of the preferred COs: “CO3: Intelligent”, “CO1: Hey!” and “CO7: Titanic”.

The majority of answers (POSAT RMs in the case of these COs, as has already been explained) fell into the category of “Agreement-Acceptance”. Nonetheless, while 83 of the RMs recorded for “CO1: Hey!” (see examples (18) and (19)) and 43 of the ones collected in response to “CO7: Titanic” (see examples (20) and (21)) were of this type, the sample collected in response to “CO3: Intelligent” was more varied even if it also

counted with 26 instances of “Agreement-Acceptance” responses (see examples (22) and (23)):

(18) *Buenaaaaaaaaasss* [What’s up!]

(19) Heey 🙄

(20) *Guau, no lo había oído nunca jajajs* [Wow, I had never Heard that one before
hahaha]

(21) Hahahah that was funny, you have my attention

(22) *Oís, muchas gracias* [Aww, thank you very much]

(23) Thanks!! I do my best 😊

However, 15 of the women replying to “CO3: Intelligent” shifted the focus of the compliment (“Agreement-transfer”), as can be observed in examples (24) and (25):

(24) *Con esfuerzo y dedicación todo se puede!* [Everything is possible with some effort
and dedication]

(25) I’m 100% sure you’re intelligent too!

Also, seven women mitigated the compliment or used self-deprecation (“Non agreement-scale down”), as illustrated by examples (26) and (27):

(26) *Tampoco te creas* [Not really]

(27) Hahah thanks it's not as challenging as it seems actually

In the case of POSAT IMs, though not very numerous, most of these answers were shaped as questions (remember that this category was originally designed to include those structures in which the compliment was questioned but in this study it will include questions formulated to the initiator). Some examples of “CO3: Intelligent” (see examples (28) and (29)), “CO1: Hey!” (see examples (30) and (31)) and “CO7: Titanic” (see examples (32) and (33)) can be observed below:

(28) *Tú qué haces?* [What do you do?]

(29) What do you study?

- (30) *Que[sic] tal!!* 🙄 [How are you?]
 (31) How are u?
 (32) *No morirás al final de la peli?* [You won't die at the end of the film right?]
 (33) Was it really? :)

The most typical shape of POSAT RMIM answers was very different depending on the CO. Responses to “CO3: Intelligent” were distributed mainly among “Agreement-acceptance”, “Agreement-transfer” and “Non agreement- scale down” with fewer responses of the types “Non Agreement- non Acceptance” (see examples (34) and (35)), “Other Interpretations- invitation/offer/ request” (see examples (36) and (37)) and “Other Interpretations-question” (see examples (38) and (39)):

- (34) *Prejuicioso y quíerele un poco más, hombre!* [That's just prejudice, love yourself a bit more, man!]
 (35) Lol, no I'm not! It's really not that hard, it just has to be you passion, what will that be in your case, mister?
 (36) I'm sure you could!! I can try and explain you 😊
 (37) I'm not sure about studying, but sure we can do some other things together...
 🙄👉👈
 (38) *Jajajaj, y que [sic] es de tu vida? Estudias?* [Hahaha, and what about you? Are you a student?]
 (39) *Alaa!! Y q [sic] haces?* [Wow! And what do you do?]

At the same time, the most extended type of POSAT RMIM in the case of “CO1: Hey!” was “Other Interpretations- question” (see examples (40) and (41)).

- (40) *Hola!!! Que [sic] tal?* [Hello! How are you?]
 (41) Heyyy howw you doinn? [sic]

This is interesting since it shows that, despite this CO's simplicity, it was able to generate a response with the potential to keep the conversation going. Moreover, it should be noticed that, in order to enrich the response to “CO1: Hey!”, people made use of resources such as repetition of vowel sounds, as in examples (42) and (43), or the use of exclamation

marks, as observed by Darics (2013) in order to express different emotions such as affect and excitement, as instantiated by examples (44) and (45). Moreover, emojis were also used for this purpose, as highlighted by Hinrichs (2015) and as a sign of friendliness (see instances (46) and (47)):

(42) *Buenaaaaaaaaasss* [What's up]

(43) *Hiii*

(44) *Hola!* [Hello!]

(45) *Hi!*

(46) 🤔

(47) *Hey :)*

The majority of the POSAT RMIM answers to “CO7: Titanic” were “Agreement-acceptance”, “Other Interpretations-Question” (see examples (48) and (49)) and “Other Interpretations-Invitation/Offer/ Request” (see examples (50) and (51)):

(48) *Jajajaja vieja pero clásica! Cómo va?* [Hahaha old but classic! What's up?]

(49) *Jajajajaja ¿eres de los que piensa que Leo realmente quería morir? Porque los dos cabían en la maldita tabla* [Hahahaha, are you one of those who think that Leo really wanted to die? Because they both fit in the damn board!]

(50) *Jajajaajjjaa nos casamos ya?* [Hahahahaha marry me already]

(51) *Yeah, it was bad, I hope you jokes are better in bed, because I want you to break me.*

It is noticeable that, even if some differences were found in the distribution of the most recurrent type of answers, a tendency could also be identified which indicated that most POSAT responses were formulated as “Agreement-acceptance” commentaries. The individual differences observed could possibly be a consequence of the different format of the COs.

In this manner, “CO3: Intelligent”, which included a compliment about the woman's intellect and a self-deprecation comment, collected a high number of “Agreement-transfers” and “Non Agreement- scale down” responses, which reflected the application of Leech's (1983) maxims of modesty (minimise expression of praise of self, maximise

expression of dispraise of self) and generosity (minimise expression of benefit to self, maximise expression of cost to self). In a similar vein, the responses to “CO1: Hey!”, a conventional greeting, showed the application of Grice’s cooperative principle since most responses were greeting backs of the types “Agreement- acceptance” or “Other Interpretations-Question”. Finally, the fact that “CO7: Titanic” counted with a sociocultural referent produced some “Agreement- comment history” (see examples (52) and (53)) and “Other Interpretations- invitation/ offer/ request” answers:

- (52) *Creo que el hielo rompio [sic] El Titanic... prueba con un oso/pingüino obeso que igual te va mejor 😊* [I think it was the ice which broke the Titanic... next time try with an obese bear/ penguin, it may do the trick]
- (53) Sadly, I’ve never seen the Titanic

4.2.2. Women’s negative reactions through language

Now, the linguistic behaviour of women towards the two most dispreferred COs; namely, “CO8: Stem” and “CO6: Roses”, will be looked into and discussed. The purpose of this section is to try to throw some light upon the reasons behind women’s dislike of these COs. To facilitate the reading process, this section has been structured as the previous one, that is, first the analysis of attitude of response, followed by CA and Herbert’s classification of compliment responses.

%		Negative attitude	Positive Attitude	Unclear Attitude
CO8: Stem	T _{SP}	48.8	22.6	28.6
	T _{EN}	47.1	33.3	19.6
CO6: Roses	T _{SP}	47.6	26.2	26.2
	T _{EN}	51.0	19.6	29.4

Figure 18. Attitude of responses to the most dispreferred COs: “CO8: Stem” and “CO6: Roses”. ²⁸

²⁸ T: Absolute percentage (Total number of responses considered)

The fact that these were the most dispreferred COs determined that significant differences were observed regarding the volume of negative attitude (NEGAT) answers and that of the positive attitude ones ($\chi^2=0.001$) since most women would display a NEGAT one when responding to them even if some POSAT responses were also found. The differences between English and Spanish were not significant. However, a slightly more evident variation could be observed in the case of the POSAT responses since, in the case of “CO6: Roses”, the percentage of Spanish responses surpassed in 6.6% that of their English counterparts and the opposite phenomenon took place regarding “CO8: Stem”. Here, the number of POSAT responses in English was 33.3%, as opposed to 22.6% in Spanish. Some further information in this line will be provided in the following section.

After contrasting the results of the two COs by means of the Chi Square test, it can be stated that no significant differences were found among the two in terms of attitude since the distribution is almost the same in both cases. In other words, around half of the sample of the Spanish and English answers to “CO6: Roses” (47.6% and 51.0%, respectively) and “CO8: Stem” (48.8% and 47.1%, respectively) were NEGAT responses and between a third and a fifth were POSAT answers. This fluctuation (19.6% of POSAT answers to “CO6: Roses” and 33.3% responses to “CO8: Stem”) was worth commenting since it showed that female English speakers responded 13.7% more favourably to “CO8: Stem” than they did to “CO6: Roses”. This may be due to the fact that English speakers, as a consequence of their familiarity with the English culture, interpreted this CO much more as a cute-flippant strategy (which, as commented before has been repeatedly categorised in previous studies as one of the least preferred ones) than their Spanish counterparts who might have thought that it was only a witty rhyme. Later in this section, this difference between the two COs will be further investigated.

Then, the results were analysed from the point of view of CA, since these were the most dispreferred COs, it was expected that most people would show their dislike for the CO by resorting to RMs which would not encourage a second initiation move or to even more definite measures such as N/A or UM. However, it must not be forgotten that these two COs had been regarded as the most sexually explicit by the interviewees. This type of highly sexual commentaries, even in a context such as Tinder which is often used as a means to contact people for occasional sex, might remind some women of catcalls or other type of unwanted and sexualising attention. Therefore, as can be observed in Figure 18, it is not surprising to find that women often produced IM in response to these COs.

The form of this IM will be studied hereafter but, as pointed out by Di Gennaro and Ritschel (2019), the answers may reflect how pleased, frightened, intimidated, flattered, indifferent or self-conscious they made them feel. The figure displays the number of answers and the relative percentages in terms of attitude and CA.

% 		UM		N/A		RM		IM		RMIM	
		SP	EN	SP	EN	SP	EN	SP	EN	SP	EN
CO8: Stem	%	3.6	0.0	10.7	9.8	38.1	47.1	29.8	35.3	17.9	7.8
	N	3	0	9	5	32	24	25	18	15	4
Total_N		3		14		56		43		19	
CO6: Roses	%	2.4	0.0	9.5	9.8	56.0	47.1	20.2	35.3	11.9	7.8
	N	2	0	8	5	47	24	17	18	10	4
Total_N		2		13		71		35		14	

Figure 19. Total number and percentages of unmatches (UM), no answers (N/A), response moves (RM), initiation moves (IM), and response move and initiation move (RMIM) in response to the most dispreferred COs: “CO8: Stem” and “CO6: Roses”.

When considering the total values in terms of the type of response, a tendency was observed: the most frequent type of answer was RM, followed by IM and then by N/A and RMIM. Nonetheless, some differences were observed when contrasting the responses of “CO8: Stem” and those of “CO6: Roses”. First, the number of RMs of “CO6: Roses” was much smaller than that of “CO8: Stem”, consequently, the number of IMs of “CO6: Roses” was lower than that of “CO8: Stem”. Finally, the number of RMIMs, N/As and UMs of “CO8: Stem” was slightly higher than that of “CO6: Roses”. The reaction of English speakers did not differ in the two COs. Nonetheless, that of Spanish speakers varied more greatly, as can be observed in Figure 20. In this language, while the percentage of RMs to “CO6: Roses” was over half of the sample, that of “CO8: Stem” barely reached 40%. In English, the percentage almost accounted to 50%. Contrastingly, in the case of IMs, in both “CO8: Stem” and “CO6: Roses”, the number of answers was lower (5.5% in the case of the first and 15.1% in that of the latter) in Spanish than in

English, even if this difference was especially evident in the case of “CO6: Roses”. Then, it was noticed that the number of RMIMs in English was particularly low; in Spanish, this type of response was not especially frequent since it only accounted to 17.9% but it was still a more popular type of response to “CO8: Stem” than it was to “CO6: Roses”. The percentages of N/A and UM were practically the same in response to both COs, though a little bit higher in response to “CO8: Stem”.

From this analysis, it can be gathered that the behaviour of English speakers towards these COs was very similar, even if that of Spanish speakers was more polarised. This might be due to the fact that, among the latter, an average of 3% would unmatched the person and an average of 10.1% would not reply but, by contrast, women responding in Spanish had a higher tendency to resort to RMIMs (the most preferred type of answer). A combination of the attitude and CA approaches is shown below in order to display the distribution of this type of responses across the POSAT and the NEGAT answers (note that the percentages do not add up because the responses with an unclear attitude have not been considered).

%		Negative attitude					Positive attitude		
		UM	N/A	RM	IM	RMIM	RM	IM	RMIM
CO8: Stem	SP	3.6	10.7	28.6	5.6	1.2	10.7	9.5	6.0
	EN	0	9.8	31.4	7.8	2.0	5.9	11.8	2.0
CO6: Roses	SP	2.4	9.5	11.9	20.2	2.4	7.1	2.4	13.1
	EN	0	9.8	15.7	21.6	0	15.7	9.8	7.8

Figure 20. Analysis in terms of attitude and CA of the most dispreferred COs: “CO8: Stem” and “CO6: Roses”.

As can be seen in Figure 18, there is a striking difference between the reaction to both COs. First, it must be noticed that the majority of NEGAT responses to “CO8: Stem” were RMs. Many of these took the form of farewells (see examples (54) and (55):

(54) *Adios[sic]* [Good bye]

(55) *Seeyaaa [sic]*

Though not very high, a certain number NEGAT answers were IMs. Women took this opportunity to express disgust (see examples (27) and (28)), to insult their interlocutors (see examples (29) and (30)) or, as explained by del Teso-Cravioto (2006), to use appropriation; in other words, to construct a metaphorical expression of rejection with the same or similar referents to those utilised in the CO (see examples (32) and (33) in response to “CO8: Stem”):

(27) *que [sic] puto asco* [Fucking disgusting]

(28) That was gross.

(29) *Imbecil* [Moron]

(30) Asshole

(31) *Pues avisame [sic] si necesitas ayuda con la poda* ☺ [Let me know if you need any help pruning]

(32) *Se te ve alto de etileno más bien* [You rather seem high on ethylene]

(33) *Por lo que veo el 90% de tus neuronas también las tienes en el tallo* [It seems 90% of your neurones are in your stem too]

This is interesting since none of the participants who responded in English resorted to appropriation. A possible reason for this might be that English is generally considered a less direct language (and more negative politeness oriented) than Spanish, though further research should be carried out in order to test the extent of the validity of this statement. Nonetheless, in the case of CO6: Roses, it must be mentioned that in the form of NEGAT RMs, and this being a nursery rhyme, it was likely that people would mock it by connecting it to childishness. This construction was more extended among the English responses, as can be seen in examples (34) and (35) below (possibly because this rhyme is only popular within the English-speaking culture and it does not have an equivalent version in the Spanish one). However, a couple of answers in this line were also found among the Spanish data:

(34) *Vaya, estás en secundaria. Me temo que soy demasiado mayor para ti.* [Oh, Dear! you are a high schooler. I’m afraid I’m too old for you].

(35) Roses are red, that pick up[sic] line was fine, but I think its[sic] a bit past your bedtime.

In response to this same CO and displaying a more positive attitude since they were shaped as IMs, a more collaborative manner, the use of poetry constituted another important factor which could trigger a number of topic-bound-responses. In general, these were likely to be from the point of view of mockery, as can be exemplified in examples (36) and (37):

(36) *Patético intento de poesía*. [Pathetic poetry attempt]

(37) Poetry is not your thing, sorry!

Notwithstanding, the fact that he made the effort to elaborate this rhyme also had the potential of being acknowledged and some women took the chance to show their appreciation of the CO, as can be observed in examples (38) and (39):

(38) Jajajajaj solo por esa gran introducción me lo pienso [Hahahahahah, I'll think about it just for that great introduction]

(39) Too direct but funny

Then, in regard to POSAT answers, some variation was found taking into consideration the variable of language since Spanish speakers resorted to RMs almost twice as many times as the English speakers. In the case of RMIM, the number of Spanish answers triplicated that of the English ones. Among these could be found expressions which transmitted the person's admiration for the CO (see examples (40) and (41) in response to "CO8: Stem", praise of its jocular nature (see examples (42) and (43)), curiosity over the man's career (see examples (44) and (45)), or even invitation to sexual interaction (see examples (46) and (47)):

(40) *Jajajajajajajajja tú de dónde has salido?* [Hahahah, where did you come from?]

- (41) Hahaha nice one! What are you studying?”)
- (42) JAJAJAJAJA solo por esto, te invito a una cerveza! [HAHAHAHHAHA just for that the next beer is one me!]
- (43) Hahahha impressive joke 😊😊
- (44) Jajajajaja eres botánico? [Hahahahaha are you a botanist?]
- (45) Are you a giberlin?
- (46) Bueno, bueno... sabes leer las etiquetas de la ropa y eres un friki de la biologia....
[sic] si seguimos hablando así se me va a empezar a humedecer el gineceo... [Well, well, well... you can read washing levels and you are a biology nerd... if we continue talking my gynoecium might get wet]
- (47) Come and check it 😊

As shown by the above discussion, “CO8: Stem” owed its polarised responses to its nature as a direct and cute-flippant CO belonging to the physical flirting style, which made a scientific metaphorical reference to sexual arousal as a consequence of a physical attribute of the woman (a practice, as reported by Gao *et al.* (2017), which women tended to appreciate). Nonetheless, it also included a metaphorical expression which made reference to the male genitals which, as reported by Nicklin *et al.* (2020:3) in their study on unsolicited sexual explicit media content shared over social media, was rated by women as “significantly less funny [...], less exciting [...], and more disturbing [...]”, which justifies the high number of NEGAT answers. However, since the sample was not that big, and not many studies have been conducted along these lines, this data can only be said to reveal tendencies.

Regarding “CO6: Roses”, most NEGAT answers were IMs, followed by RMs which counted with a higher percentage in English (15.7%) than in Spanish (11.9%). This might be explained by the cultural meaning of this CO which, as explained before, only worked in English and generated initiating responses connected, for instance, to childishness. The lack of NEGAT RMIMs might be interpreted along these same lines. In regard to POSAT answers, it is worth mentioning the high number of RMs (the same number as the NEGAT RMs) and IMs (in contrast with the Spanish responses) and the reduced number of RMIMs. In English, the high number of RMs and IMs enunciated with both a positive and a negative attitude and the low number of RMIM might indicate that “CO6: Roses” was either interpreted as an IM which solely required a RM to complete the adjacency

pair or as an IM which could be disregarded in favour of another IM. The combination of both strategies, that is, the most preferred response, seemed to be repeatedly disregarded.

Looking at the results from the point of view of Herbert's taxonomy (1986) (see Appendix 4), it was noticed that most NEGAT answers took the form of "Non agreement-non acceptance". In a manner, this is not surprising since, together with the written answers, the UM responses were also counted as examples of this strategy. This decision was grounded on the fact that, by unmatching the person, women were showing their disapproval of this CO (which would classify them as examples of "Non agreement-no acceptance- qualification" responses). Moreover, the fact that this was the most frequent type of NEGAT answer might be a consequence of the communication taking place through the Internet. Among the collected examples, but particularly in the case of the Spanish answers, some unmitigated fustigating impolite strategies were found (see examples (48), (49), (50) and (51)). This behaviour, though not very common, is not unusual in either of the languages, as reported by Kaul-de Maldeon and Alba-Juez (2012). Notwithstanding, further studies ought to be conducted in order to investigate this issue more in depth.

(48) *Tu q[sic] eres? Gilipollas?* [And you are what, a dickhead?]

(49) *Anda a la mierda* [Go to hell]

(50) *Te metia [sic] fuego* [I'd set you on fire]

(51) Asshole

Additionally, the Internet psychologist Graham Jones claimed, as reported by Martin (2013), that this type of behaviour (that is, the use of impoliteness) is more typical of internet-mediated communication than of face-to-face interaction. Furthermore, according to Suler (2004), when people interact through social media, a certain disinhibition effect takes place as a result of the interplay of six different factors (anonymity, invisibility, asynchronicity, solipsistic introjection, dissociative imagination, and minimisation of authority). Consequently, it was not surprising to find that some women responded in aggressive or insulting manners, endorsed by the digital context.

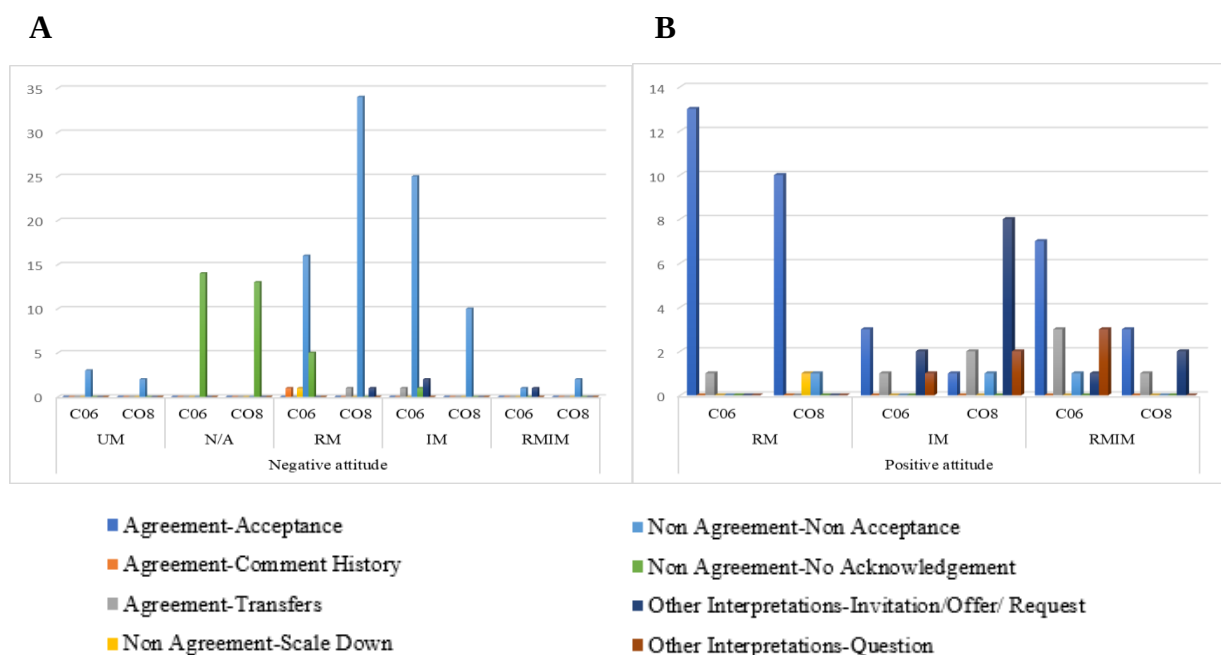


Figure 21A. Added values of English and Spanish of the categorisation of the NEGAT responses in terms of CA and Herbert's taxonomy of compliment responses of the preferred COs: "CO3: Intelligent", "CO1: Hey!" and "CO7: Titanic". **21B.** Added values of English and Spanish of the categorisation of the POSAT responses in terms of CA and Herbert's taxonomy of compliment responses of the preferred COs: "CO3: Intelligent", "CO1: Hey!" and "CO7: Titanic".

By looking at the added values, it was observed that POSAT responses were mostly of the types "Agreement- acceptance" (see examples (52) and (53)), "Agreement- transfer" (see examples (54) and (55)), "Other Interpretations- invitation/offer/request" (see examples (56) and (57)) or "Other interpretations- question" (see examples (58) and (59)). Even if, as previously commented, no greater differences were observed between the behaviour of women towards "CO8: Stem" and "CO6: Roses", this type of answers were more numerous in response to the first one:

(52) jajajajajaj son 100% natural, no te preocupes que eso les pasa a todos 😊😊

[Hahahah, they are 100% natural, don't worry, they seem to have that impact on men]

(53) Dammmm...i [sic] liked this ice breaker question 😊😊

(54) *Quién dijo que no se podía ser un fucker y un nerd al mismo tiempo jajaja* [who said you couldn't be a fucker and a nerd hahahha]

(55) JAJAJAJAJAJA VAYA CRACK [Hahahah, what a great guy]

- (56) *Yo puedo ayudarte con ese alargamiento...* 😊😊 [I can give you a hand with that elongation...]
- (57) I don't care about the size as long as you are able to eat me out
- (58) *Jajajajaja qué estudias?* [Hahaha What are you studying?]
- (59) Are you a giberlin?

Nevertheless, even if they were not that frequent, most POSAT responses to “CO6: Roses” fell within these categories; namely “Agreement- acceptance” (see examples (60) and (61)), “Other Interpretations- invitation/offer/request” (see examples (62) and (63)) or “Other interpretations- question” (see examples (64) and (65)):

- (60) *Jajajajaj solo por esa gran introducción me lo pienso* [Hahahah, I'll consider it just because of this great intro]
- (61) Hahaha nice one. What if i'd rather be the nine?
- (62) *Las rosas son rojas, las violetas están bien, si quieres echar un polvo, invítame antes a un café* [Roses are red, violets are nice, if you want to fuck, let's grab some coffe first]
- (63) How about we meet tomorrow?
- (64) *te[sic] funciona con todas?* xD [Does this usually work? xD]
- (65) Can I be 6?

It was also noticeable that, in regard “CO6: Roses”, and contrarily to what was expected (that is, that women will not feel motivated enough by such a direct and explicit CO to take the time to elaborate an answer), some women built a context around the number 69 and they used references to other numbers to construe their answers: some of them resorted to mathematical references, as in examples (66) and (67); others followed the word game of 69, as illustrated by example (68); made linguistic jokes with numbers, as in example (69); or used numeric references to indicate personal preferences or to encode cues to sexual inferences, as in examples (70) and (71).

- (66) *Y yo pido ser un intervalo numérico inexistente* [And I would rather be an inexistent numeric interval].

- (67) *Yo sere[sic] el nueve pero tu[sic] eres un cero a la izquierda* [I might be the nine but you are a zero].
- (68) *Jo tioooooo, me habia pedido ser el 6 yo* [Oh, maaaaan, I wanted to be the six]
- (69) *Que le dice un dos a un cero veinte conmigo* [What does a two say to a cero? Come with me²⁹]
- (70) *Jajajajaja, poeta y matemático? Eso si...[sic] si la cosa va de números, mi favorito es el 5... ;)* [Hahahahah, poet and mathematician? But if we're talking numbers, my favorite is 5 😊]
- (71) 4 is my fav 😊

These instances of “Agreement- acceptance” responses were highly cooperative and show a very positive perception of the CO. Moreover, when resorting to “Other Interpretations- invitation/offer/request” or “Other interpretations-questions”, women showed their interest in keeping the conversation going and the interest for the other person since they took the initiative to make propositions or ask questions.

4.3. An overview of similarities and differences in English and Spanish women's responses to Tinder COs

Considering that Spanish and English are languages linked to two different cultures, it would be expected that the answers provided by the participants of this study acted as a reflection of this pragma-cultural disparity. In other words, it would be expected, drawing on Cordella *et al.* (1995) and Níkleva and Rodríguez-Muñoz (2017) that people's behaviour in such face-threatening situation (i.e. being approached by a stranger on the Internet who very likely has some type of sexual interest) would be different in both languages. Spanish speakers, as representors of a more positive politeness oriented culture were more likely to willingly engage in playful interaction, return compliments and enjoy direct remarks and English speakers, as members of a more negative-oriented culture, would probably feel more at ease when approached in polite and innocuous manners. Nonetheless, with the exception of some differences, the results obtained from

²⁹ In Spanish, this is a word game since the Spanish name for twenty (*veinte*) is similar to the imperative of the verb “to go” and the second person personal pronoun (*vente*).

this study turned out to be very similar in both languages, the possible reasons that might justify these results will be presented in the following subsections.

4.3.1. Similarities in English and Spanish women's responses to Tinder COs

It has already been suggested that no statically significant differences have been found between the English and Spanish data. Figure 22 below contains the results of the Chi Square Test that show that people tended to react in similar manners to the same COs independently of the language used. This general absence of differences was observed in terms of attitude of response and type of response (according the two classifications utilised, namely CA and Herbert's taxonomy).

	"CO3: Intelligent"	"CO1: Hey!"	"CO7: Titanic"	"CO8: Stem"	"CO6: Roses"
χ^2	0.330	0.898	0.466	0.332	0.667

Figure 22. Results of χ^2 analysis of Spanish and English differences.

As previously explained, it is believed that the resemblance between the data in both languages might be due to three possible reasons: first, contamination of the sample; second, participants' reduced pragmatic competence; and/ or third, similarity of behaviour as a consequence of globalisation.

The first and second possibilities were considered after analysing the characteristics of the women who responded to the questionnaires. As it has been explained women were given the option to respond in both languages if they wished to do so, therefore, there is a possibility that the participants' pragmatic competence would allow them to adapt their linguistic strategies to the language they were communicating in, responding to the same CO in different manners in both languages. Out of the 51 women who responded to the questionnaire in English, 41 had done so in Spanish as well and eight were not native-speakers of English, it is a therefore possibility that they might have incurred into transfers from their native languages (Bulgarian, Croatian, German, Hindi, Italian, Spanish and Ukrainian). As a matter of fact, in some cases, very similar responses were found in both English and Spanish in response to the same CO. This was more easily spotted in the least preferred Coos' "CO8: Stem", for instance, was one answer in Spanish that was almost

the exact translation of another one in English (see examples (72) and (73)) and a similar situation happened in the case of “CO6: Roses” (see examples (74) and (75)) and “CO7: Titanic” (see examples (76) and (77)).

(72) *Creo que no hablamos el mismo idioma* [I think we speak different languages]

(73) I don't speak your language

(74) *La poesia [sic] no es lo tuyo, bay[sic]* [Poetry is not your thing, bye]

(75) Poetry is not your thing, sorry!

(76) *Tienes mi atención* [You have my attention]

(77) You have my attention

This type of transfers is very common, particularly among non-native speakers who only use the language occasionally.

Additionally to the possible transfer, globalization might have also played a part in this process through Schipitsina's (2019: 225) notion of hybridity, which is utilised in the context of Internet communication to refer to the practice of “mixing genetically different communication codes in a communication act”. She enumerates six different types of hybridity: ethnographic, cultural, oral/written, stylistic, semiotic and genre. This dissertation is concerned with the notion of “cultural hybridity” on the Internet, a concept which entails the “mixing of word elements/words or sentences expressed in different languages in one word/ sentence/ text” (Schipitsina, 2019: 225). Some examples of this phenomenon can be found in the Spanish data:

(78) Lol

(79) OMG

(80) Thank u next

(81) Wtf

Moreover, sometimes, the English word was adapted according to Spanish phonetics as in the following examples:

(82) Jelooou[sic] [Hello]

(83) Jey! [sic] [Hey]

To sum up, it is likely that a combination of both processes might have taken place. On the one hand, the respondents might have transferred structures and expressions from one language to the other as a consequence of the small time-lapse between their exposure to the two situations and, possibly, their reduced pragmatic skills in the context of flirting in a foreign language. On the other hand, the Internet has given users the opportunity to construct their own cultural *collages* by mixing different attributes and aspects of different cultures which have blurred the differences between cultures and, therefore, the expected pragmatic behaviour.

4.3.2. Differences in English and Spanish women's responses to Tinder COs

Despite what has been commented in the previous section, some differences have been found and will be commented upon. First, "CO7: Titanic", one of the preferred COs, presented certain variation among the English and Spanish answers of the types NEGAT RMs and POSAT RMIMs. The former showed a markedly higher frequency of usage of this strategy in English than in Spanish. In this same line, the percentage of POSAT RMIMs in Spanish (7.8%) was much lower than that of English (25%). From these results can be extracted that "CO7: Titanic" was generally not as positively regarded by the English speakers than by the Spanish audience. This may occur as a result of the possible cultural associations which this CO might entail (for instance, the sinking of the British liner Titanic might be a more sensitive topic for those who identify themselves with the British culture than for those who do not), or it might be connected to the perception of humour in each culture; as explained by Kettle-Williams (n.a.) cited by Harrison (2013):

"They [Spanish people]’ve got a strong sense of humour. Not like ours [English people], not understated, not culture-bound, but a little bit brash, sometimes a little bit common. They’re not afraid of sexual topics as we are in northern Europe. They’re, not so put off by political correctness, they don’t see that as such a barrier. And of course that brings up the whole idea of sexuality [...] their humour is more direct, more open, more frank".

Either way, it is an expectation that should be further studied in future investigations.

“CO3: Intelligent” generated a higher number of “Agreement-transfer” strategies in Spanish than in English when shaped as POSAT RMs and RMIM. The reasons behind this disparity in the two languages might probably be cultural since, in Spanish, the most extended practice when reacting to compliments is, as reported by Lázaro-Ruiz (2016), closer to rejection, by mitigating its importance or by placing the responsibility somewhere else. When this behaviour was observed in English, a language in which it is generally not that frequent, it can be said that the speakers were probably incurring in transfer. Contrastingly, in English, as reported by Ziaei (2012), the “correct” (school taught) way of responding to a compliment is by thanking the other person, that is, accepting it. Nonetheless, the results obtained from this study tally with those by Herbert (1986), which defend that the real-data distribution of compliment responses in English was, in fact, much more varied than just “Agreement- acceptance-comment acceptance”.

Finally, more marked differences were found regarding the most dispreferred COs. In the case of “CO8: Stem”, the clearest difference was the percentage of POSAT RMs whose number in Spanish (10.7%) almost duplicated that in English (5.9%). However, this data is consistent with the opposing tendency in English, where the number of POSAT IMs was higher. What can be concluded from this differentiation is that “CO8: Stem” was better regarded by the English participants than by the Spanish ones. The use of such intricate long and metaphorical structures to convey a type of sexual insinuation seems to be a more popular strategy in this language. However, the responses to “CO6: Roses” seem to be more polarised. In Spanish, on the one hand, the data reveal moderated percentages of NEGAT UMs, N/As, RMs and IMs, low percentages of POSAT RMs and IMs and a moderate number of POSAT RMIMs. In English, with the exception of the UM and RMIM answers, all NEGAT answers seem to follow the same tendency as in Spanish. Nevertheless, when looking at the POSAT responses, the percentage of the English RMs (17.7%) doubled that of the Spanish ones (7.1%) and those of IMs also differed greatly even if both percentages were fairly small (2.4% in Spanish and 9.8% in English). However, in the case of POSAT RMIM the situation was reversed and almost half of the Spanish sample (13.1%) formed the English one (7.8%). This tendency seems to show that, even if “CO6: Roses” was one of the least preferred COs, some people, enjoyed being referred to by means of this expression, particularly in Spanish. Again, this might be a consequence of the lack of familiarity with the original rhyme, culturally

bound (since more explicit sexual references might be more accepted in the Spanish culture than they are in the English one) or a matter of humour.

5. Conclusions

This Master's Dissertation has aimed to study women's reactions in both English and Spanish to different Tinder COs with the purpose of establishing their preferences based on their attitude and type of response. Having carried out this investigation, the answer to the research questions which were formulated in the Introduction section can now be summarized.

RQ1 inquired after the type(s) of conversation starters in Tinder (based on Kleinke *et al.*'s classification of opening lines and Hall *et al.*'s one of flirting styles) which were most likely to generate preferred answers in women when formulated in English and Spanish. After testing one example of each of Hall *et al.*'s flirting styles (with the sole exception of the traditional flirting style), and based on the results obtained from this analysis, it can be affirmed that polite COs such as the one used in "CO1: Hey!" was the one which generated the most elevated number of POSAT responses when used in the form of CO to address young women, followed by "CO3: Intelligent", which counted with a high number of POSAT responses but also with more NEGAT responses than "CO1: Hey!". However, those answers were more frequently shaped as IMs or RMIMs, fostering conversation fluency and making it a more preferred CO than it. Meanwhile, almost all the answers to "CO1: Hey!" were shaped as RMs, leaving their male interlocutors with the responsibility to continue the conversational exchange. "CO7: Titanic" was mostly well received but it did not collect as many positive answers as "CO1: Hey!" and "CO3: Intelligent".

On the other hand, "CO8: Stem" and "CO6: Roses" were the two COs which generated a greater number of negative responses. This was possibly due to the fact that, in general, women tended to dislike very explicitly sexual comments (typical of the physical flirting style of which these two COs were representative).

In the case of Kleinke *et al.*'s classification of opening lines (1986), it can be said that the results obtained from this study tally with those gathered by other scholars in face-to-face interaction (Kleinke *et al.* 1986, Cunningham 1989 and Cunningham and Barbee 2008). Based on the results obtained in this investigation, it can be said that, in Tinder, women also seem to prefer direct ("CO3: Intelligent") or innocuous ("CO1: Hey!") COs to cute-flippant ones ("CO6: Roses", "CO7: Titanic" and "CO8: Stem"). Nonetheless, if the latter are not sexually explicit (as it is the case of "CO7: Titanic"), they do not seem to generate so much rejection, which lead to "CO7: Titanic's" position among the

preferred COs throughout this dissertation. Direct approaches such as “CO3: Intelligent” (“CO6: Roses”, and “CO8: Stem” to a much lesser extent) turned out to be very effective COs, mainly because of the absence of ambiguity which sometimes proves to be a handicap in DC, and particularly, in Tinder conversations. Consequently, though safer than direct or cute-flippant COs, innocuous ones did not prove very effective COs but were mostly useful as a way of checking the other person’s interest in continuing the conversation.

Finally, it must be mentioned that this ranking matches the preferences observed by the respondents of the interview. Nonetheless, these results invalidate H_1 since it was expected that a greater difference would be observed between face-to-face and digital interaction. This may be due to a variety of reasons: first, the use of DCTs instead of real data might have resulted in a slightly biased sample which does not faithfully represent real life interactions; secondly, the fact that the DCTs were randomly ordered might have favoured that COs such as greetings got a higher number of responses than they would in real life Tinder interactions when many similar messages pile up in women’s feeds; and thirdly, the fact that only the first adjacency pair was studied might have skewed the sample since the attitude of the conversation might have changed in subsequent conversational exchanges.

Meanwhile, RQ2 was designed in order to find out what was the most extended attitude and type of response produced by women when approached by men in Tinder by means of these COs. Regarding the attitude, more POSAT answers were observed in response to “CO1: Hey!”, “CO3: Intelligent” and “CO7: Titanic” and more negative ones were perceived in relation to “CO6: Roses” and “CO8: Stem”. From the perspective of CA, the results showed that “CO1: Hey!” and “CO7: Titanic” generated a great number of RMs in both English and Spanish, even if, in Spanish, they were frequently combined with IMs. From the perspective of continuing the conversation, these two COs did not prove particularly successful since the responsibility to start a new adjacency pair relied on the person who had started the conversational exchange. At the same time, the opposite phenomenon was observed regarding CO8 and CO6. These two COs were perceived very negatively by several participants but the most recurrent type of answer in this case was IM. In this way, the person who initiated the exchange was given a second chance so he could save face by, for example, reformulating or claiming that he was just joking. Likewise, this type of COs allowed both interlocutors to approach the topic of the

motivation for using the app in a less formulaic manner and they could save time by quickly ruling out all those people who were not fond of this type of humour or who were not interested in occasional unattached sex. As a result, “CO3: Intelligent” was the one which received a greater number of answers shaped as IMs and RMIMs in both languages (40.9% in Spanish and 33,3% in English of the POSAT answers and 40.0% and 33.3% in English of the NEGAT answers), thus being one of the most suitable in order to produce a CO which would foster the conversation’s flux. Moreover, in terms of Herbert’s taxonomy of compliment responses, even if no big differences were observed among the different strategies, “CO3: Intelligent” gathered a high number of “Agreement-acceptance”, “Agreement-transfer!” and “Other interpretation- question” which were among the most preferred response types since they all showed women’s POSAT towards the CO and their interest in continuing the conversation.

As it has been explained, RMIMs were the type of response which were most likely to allow the conversation’s progress since they could potentially result in a new adjacency pair, confirming what was conjectured in H₂.

Finally, RQ3 addressed the possible differences which could be observed when people interacted using English and Spanish. Based on the results obtained by the χ^2 test, no significant differences were observed when comparing the results for each of the COs in both English and Spanish. However, since at first sight some tendencies among the two groups were observed (for instance, women had the tendency to respond more positively in Spanish to COs like “CO7: Titanic”), it is believed that further investigations should address this issue in order to clarify if this is truly the case or if other factors (i.e. reduced and unbalanced number of responses, contamination of the sample due to participants responding to both the English and the Spanish version of the questionnaires, lack of pragma-cultural awareness, etc.) might have influenced these results.

Nonetheless, it must be mentioned that in the case of the two COs which were regarded as the least preferred by the participants, namely “CO6: Roses” and “CO8: Stem”, some meaningful differences were observed and should be commented upon.

In spite of “CO8: Stem’s” low general acceptance, the percentage of positive answers among English speakers was 10.7% higher than the Spanish ones. These results may seem inconsistent, considering that this CO was very similar to “CO6: Roses” in its form (cute-flippant, mostly direct and belonging to the physical flirting style) and the latter was better regarded by the participants who responded to the questionnaire in Spanish. However,

this might be a consequence of certain cultural attributes, such as the fact that the Spanish speaking culture tends to be more receptive in terms of flirtatious interaction than the English-speaking one (Hardy, 2010)³⁰, the cultural allusion to a nursery rhyme or the fact that this CO was more explicit (direct mention to the sexual position known as 69).

Moreover, since the English culture is known for being more negative politeness oriented whilst the Spanish one is generally depicted as more positive politeness oriented, it seems reasonable that those CO which were more explicit (and which people were more likely to associated to closer relationships) generated a greater rejection in English-speaking participants (as it happened in the case of “CO6: Roses” and “CO3: Intelligent”). However, those COs more typical of small talk (such as “CO7: Titanic” and “CO1: Hey!”) or which used metaphorical language with some intellectual taints (as in “CO8: Stem”) were more positively regarded (in spite of the fact that “CO8: Stem” was still among the least preferred COs) by the English speakers due to their impersonality (as in the case of the two first ones) or because of their originality and the possibilities it offered to redirect the conversation towards a less personal topic such as science (as happens with the latter). Consequently, it can be said that according to the results obtained from the calculation of the χ^2 , statistically significant differences between the participants’ performance in English and Spanish were not observed, which invalidated H₃. Hence, further studies should be conducted in order to verify these results.

After carrying out this study, some limitations have been encountered. First, the fact that Tinder was an app used for chatting with personal and intimate motivations, impeded the usage of real data and determined that the DCT had to be designed in order to substitute for it. As a result, some accuracy of response might have been lost in the process. Then, it must be considered that the COs resulting from the DCTs were not ordered in terms of explicitness in the questionnaire, which might be the reason behind the high acceptability of “CO1: Hey!”. Moreover, due to the different numbers of responses in English (N=51) and Spanish (N=84), in order to conduct a more thorough examination, a greater (and more balanced) sample should be used in order to check the consistency of the results obtained in this study. Furthermore, so as to avoid the contamination of the sample as a result of linguistic transfer, participants should only be

³⁰ Retrieved on 10th of June of 2020:

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/spain/8106412/Spanish-women-are-the-most-flirtatious-online.html>

allowed to respond to the COs in one of the languages, preferably their L1. Likewise, other COs of the same characteristics than those utilised in this investigation should be analysed in a similar manner in order to disregard inconsistencies originated by the use of a too small sample of COs (N=5).

As has been explained before, the topic of flirtatious interaction by means of DC remains broadly understudied, especially from the perspective of linguistics. Consequently, there is still much investigation which could be conducted in this field. First, taking the present study as a steppingstone, it would be interesting to study other segments of the population; that is from the perspective of age, gender, sexual orientation and linguist/cultural background. Additionally, a greater range of COs (including those which were not used in this study but whose data was collected) could also be looked into in order to check if any variation is observed when compared with the results obtained from this investigation. Furthermore, the use of a larger sample of respondents might help determine if the results remain not significant or present, in fact, significant differences especially in those cases in which the number of responses was limited.

6. References

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Appendix 1: Example of CO shaped as a Tinder conversation by means of a fake Tinder conversation generator.



Appendix 2: Structured Interview

You will be presented with a list of eight possible conversation starters that men might use to contact you through Tinder:

1. Hey!
2. I see you like horses... That's lucky, because you've just found yourself a stallion ;)
3. You must be super intelligent! And you are studying I couldn't if I tried
4. So you say in your bio you like pizza... to pineapple or not to pineapple? That is the question
5. Hi I just got out of prison and my parents changed the locks so I could really use a place to stay. I like your dog, by the way
6. Roses are gorgeous. Violets are fine. How about you be the six, and I'll be the nine?
7. Titanic. Sorry, that was a bad icebreaker

8. Are those trousers made of gibberellic acid? Because it's promoting elongation of my stem

A) Could you order these conversation strategies based on your personal preference?

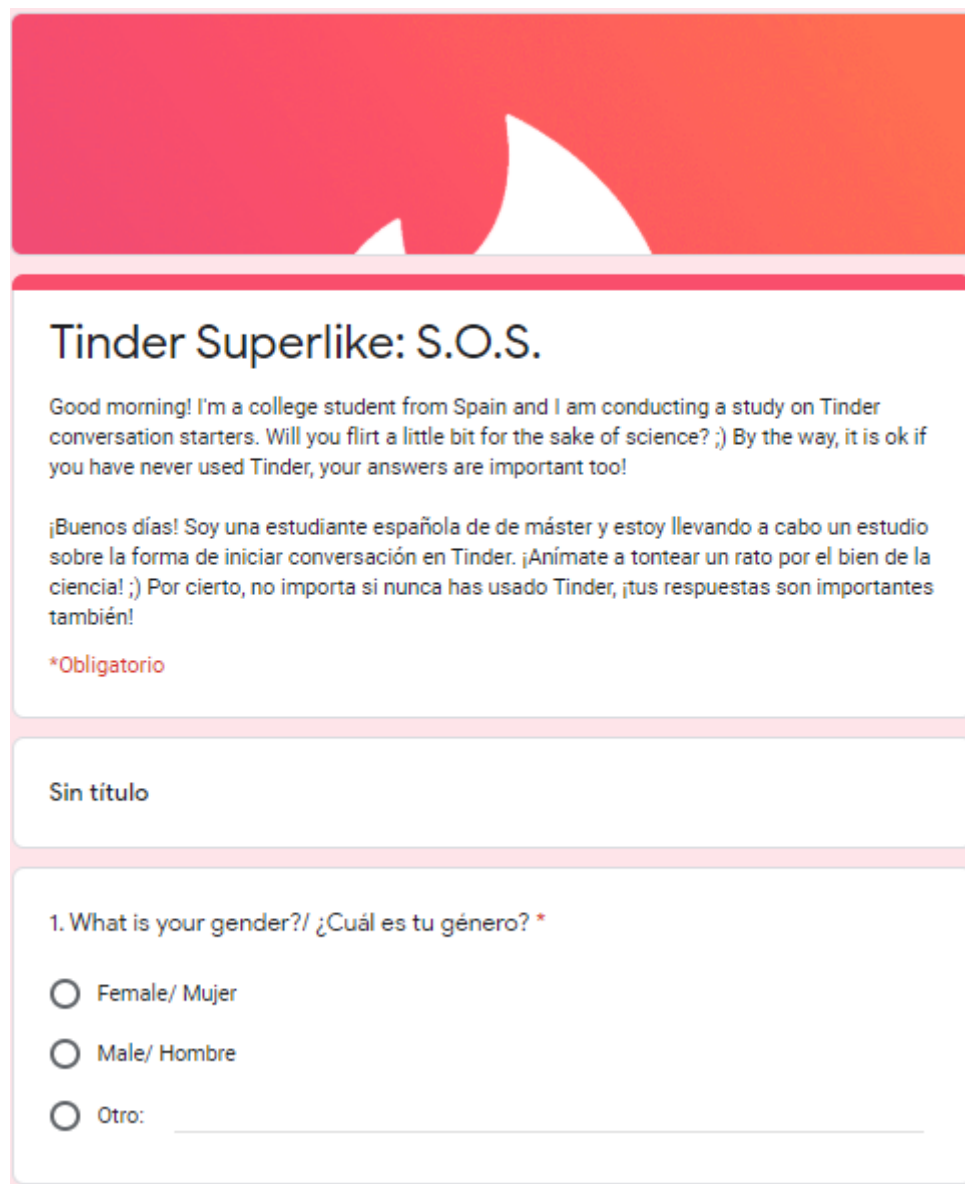
(place first the ones you like the most and last the ones you like the least).

B) Is there one or more expressions that you particularly dislike? Why?

C) Which ones would you say are the most explicit? And the least?

D) If these conversation starters had been formulated in Spanish?

Appendix 3: Questionnaire 2



The image shows a screenshot of a mobile application interface. At the top, there is a header with a pink-to-orange gradient and a white abstract shape. Below this, a white card with a pink border contains the text 'Tinder Superlike: S.O.S.' followed by an English message from a college student in Spain asking for help with a study on Tinder conversation starters. Below the English text is a Spanish translation of the same message. At the bottom of the card, it says '*Obligatorio'. Below the card is a white input field with the placeholder text 'Sin título'. At the bottom of the screen is another white card with a pink border containing a question in English and Spanish: '1. What is your gender?/ ¿Cuál es tu género? *'. There are three radio button options: 'Female/ Mujer', 'Male/ Hombre', and 'Otro:' followed by a horizontal line for a custom answer.

Tinder Superlike: S.O.S.

Good morning! I'm a college student from Spain and I am conducting a study on Tinder conversation starters. Will you flirt a little bit for the sake of science? ;) By the way, it is ok if you have never used Tinder, your answers are important too!

¡Buenos días! Soy una estudiante española de de máster y estoy llevando a cabo un estudio sobre la forma de iniciar conversación en Tinder. ¡Ánimate a tontear un rato por el bien de la ciencia! ;) Por cierto, no importa si nunca has usado Tinder, ¡tus respuestas son importantes también!

*Obligatorio

Sin título

1. What is your gender?/ ¿Cuál es tu género? *

☐ Female/ Mujer

☐ Male/ Hombre

☐ Otro: _____

2. What is your nationality?/ ¿Cuál es tu nacionalidad? *

- ☐ Spanish/ Española
- ☐ British/ Británica
- ☐ North American/ Norteamericana
- ☐ French/ Francesa
- ☐ German/ Alemana
- ☐ Irish/ Irlandesa
- ☐ Croatian/ Croata
- ☐ Italian/ Italiana
- ☐ Argentinian/ Argentina
- ☐ Ecuatorian/ Ecuatoriana
- ☐ Otro: _____

3. What is your age?/ ¿Cuál es tu edad? *

Elige

Siguiente

What language do you feel most comfortable flirting in?/ ¿En qué idioma te sientes más cómodo tonteando?

If you don't mind, choose one and then you'll be able to choose the other/ Si te es indiferente, elige uno y luego podrás elegir el otro

*

- ☐ Español/ Spanish
- ☐ Inglés/ English

Atrás

Siguiente

¡Bienvenido/a a Tinder!

Compórtate con naturalidad y responde con sinceridad. Recuerda que no hay respuestas correctas ni incorrectas y que el cuestionario es completamente anónimo

¿Con quién te gustaría ponerte en contacto a través de Tinder? *

- ☐ Mujeres
- ☐ Hombres

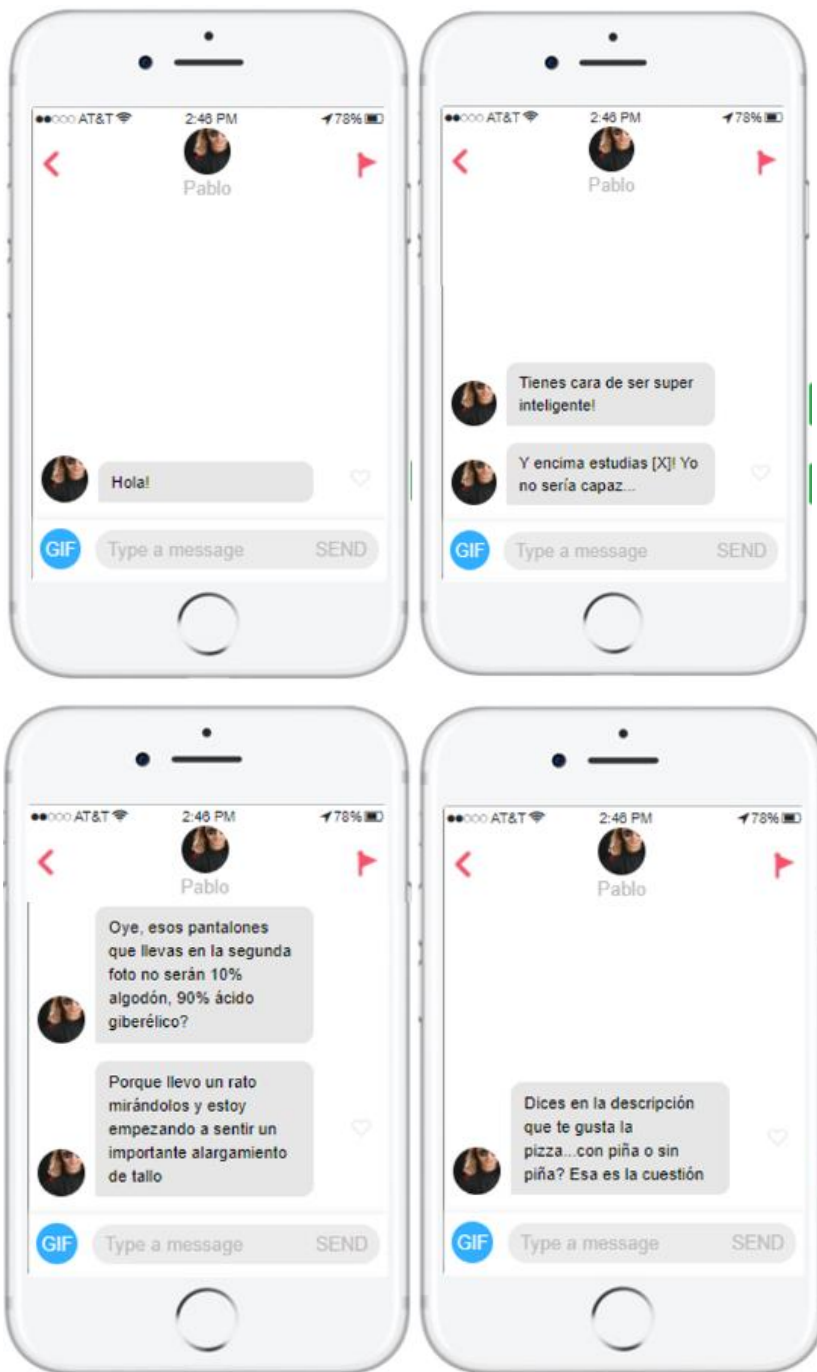
Atrás

Siguiente

¡Tienes un nuevo match!

Pablo te ha abierto conversación, ¿Qué le responderías?







¿Te gustaría ponerte en contacto con mujeres también? *

- ☐ Sí
- ☐ No
- ☐ Ya he respondido a Ana

Atrás

Siguiente

¡Buah! Me acuerdo cuando...

¿Alguien te ha dicho alguna frase parecida a la cara? ¿Has usado tú alguna de estas frases? ¿Cómo fue? *

- ☐ No...
- ☐ Otro: _____

Atrás

Siguiente

¿Do you speak English?

¿Te sentirías cómodo tonteando en inglés? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Ya he respondido a Will y/o Emma

Atrás

Siguiente

You are now on Tinder!

Just be natural and try to reply as honestly as possible, remember that there are no right or wrong answers and that everything is completely anonymous

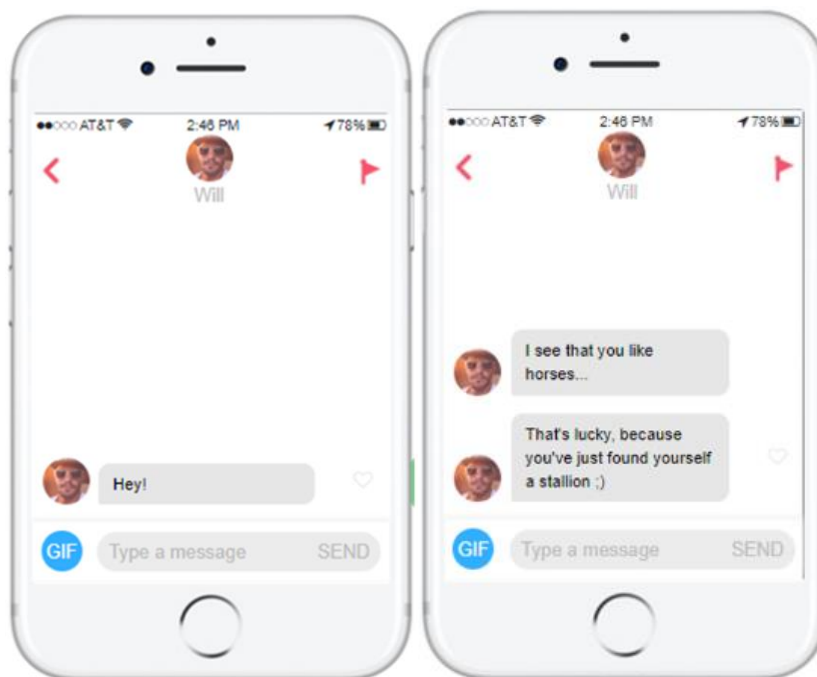
Who would you like to contact through Tinder? *

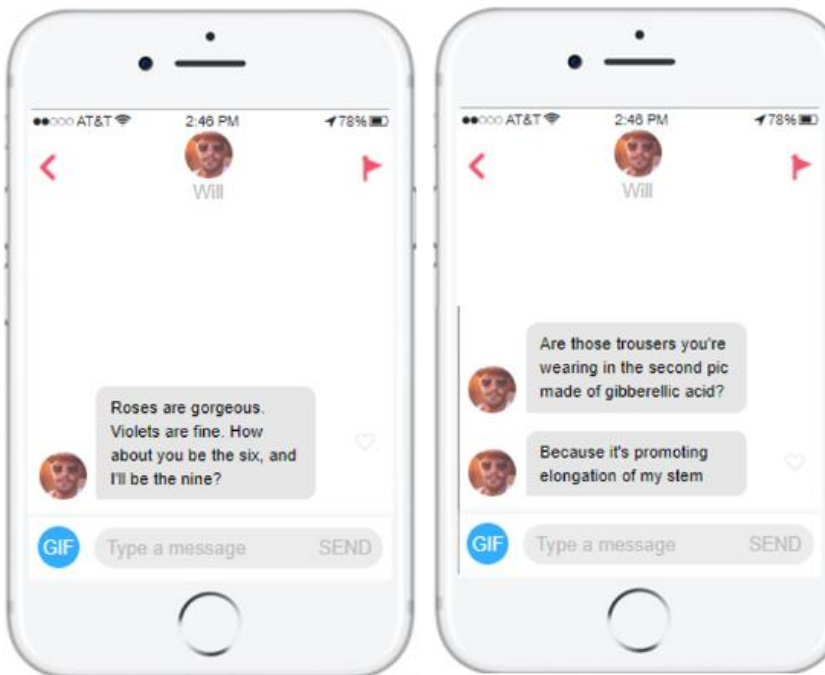
☐ Women

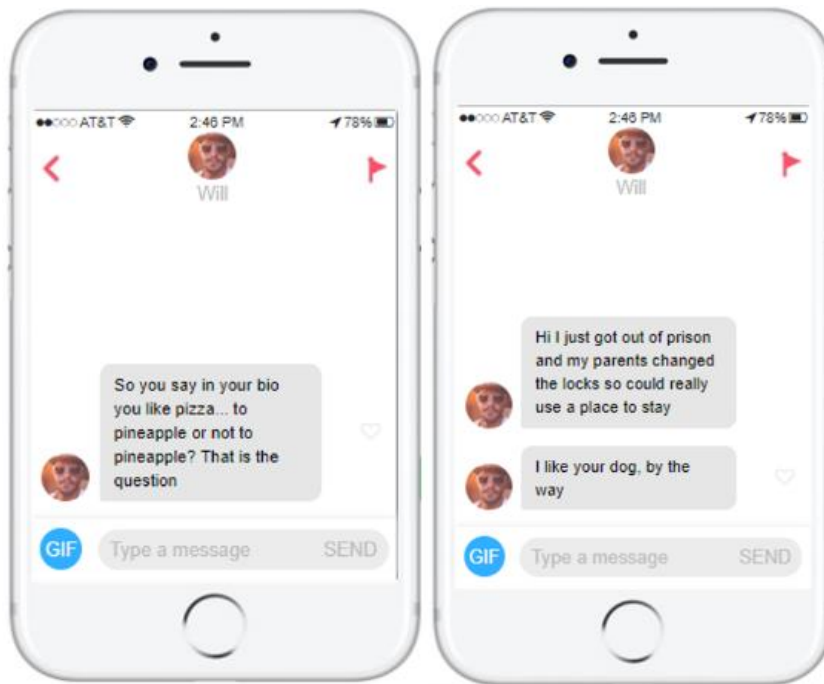
☐ Men

You have a new match!

Will has started a conversation with you! What would you reply to him?







Are you also interested in contacting women? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I've already replied to Emma

Atrás

Siguiente

Pff! I remember when...

Has anyone ever said any of these lines to you face to face? Have you ever used them yourself? Tell me briefly about your experience *

- ☐ No...
- ☐ Otro: _____

Atrás

Siguiente

¿Hablas español?

Will you feel comfortable flirting in Spanish? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I have already replied to Ana and/or Pablo

Atrás

Siguiente

¿Hablas español?

Will you feel comfortable flirting in Spanish? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I have already replied to Ana and/or Pablo

Atrás

Siguiente

Tinder Superlike: S.O.S.

¡Muchas gracias/ Thank you very much!

Nos has sido de mucha ayuda/ You have been of great help.

¿Te gustaría añadir algo más?/ Would you like to add anything else?

Tu respuesta

Atrás

Enviar

Appendix 4: Categorisation in terms of attitude, CA and Herbert's taxonomy of compliment responses

		Negative attitude										Positive attitude					
		UM		N/A		RM-		IM-		RMIM		RM+		IM+		RMIM	
		CO8	CO6	CO8	CO6	CO8	CO6	CO8	CO6	CO8	CO6	CO8	CO6	CO8	CO6	CO8	CO6
Agreement-Acceptance	SP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	8	0	1	5	2
	EN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	2	3	0	2	1
Agreement-Comment History	SP	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	EN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Agreement-Transfers	SP	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	3	1
	EN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Non Agreement-Scale Down	SP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	EN	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non Agreement-Non Acceptance	SP	3	2	0	0	10	18	15	6	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	EN	0	0	0	0	6	16	10	4	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0
Non Agreement-No Acknowledgement	SP	0	0	9	8	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	EN	0	0	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Interpretations-Invitation/Offer/Request	SP	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	5	1	2
	EN	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0
Other Interpretations-Question	SP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0
	EN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0

Figure 23. Categorisation in terms of attitude, CA and Herbert's taxonomy of compliment responses of the most dispreferred COs: "CO8: Stem" and "CO6: Roses".

		Negative attitude															Positive attitude								
		UM			N/A			RM-			IM-			RMIM-			RM+			IM+			RMIM+		
		CO3	CO1	CO7	CO3	CO1	CO7	CO3	CO1	CO7	CO3	CO1	CO7	CO3	CO1	CO7	CO3	CO1	CO7	CO3	CO1	CO7	CO3	CO1	CO7
Agreement-Acceptance	SP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	48	24	0	0	2	7	0	11
	EN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	35	19	0	0	0	4	0	2
Agreement-Comment History	SP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	1
	EN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Agreement-Transfers	SP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	1	2	0	1	1	10	1	0
	EN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	4	0	0
Non Agreement-Scale Down	SP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0
	EN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Non Agreement-Non Acceptance	SP	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
	EN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
Non Agreement-No Acknowledgement	SP	0	0	0	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	EN	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Interpretations-Invitation/Offer/Request	SP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	3
	EN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	1
Other Interpretations-Question	SP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	2	25	6
	EN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	10	1

Figure 24. Categorisation in terms of attitude, CA and Herbert's taxonomy of compliment responses of the preferred COs: "CO3: Intelligent", "CO1: Hey!" and "CO7: Titanic".