

Summary in Spanish

¿INSULTAN LOS INSULTOS? DESCORTESÍA AUTÉNTICA VS. DESCORTESÍA NO AUTÉNTICA EN ESPAÑOL COLOQUIAL

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Hasta no hace mucho, cuando alguien decidía llamar imbécil a otro estaba dispuesto a encajar las consecuencias inmediatas del asunto. Ahora cualquiera puede llamarte cualquier cosa, cabrón por ejemplo, con un alto porcentaje de impunidad, y hasta tu mejor amigo puede saludarte con un hola,gilipollín. En este país nos han descafeinado hasta los insultos de toda la vida.
Pérez Reverte (1998: 123)

1. Introducción

El verbo “insultar”, del latín *insultāre* (“saltar contra, ofender”), se define en la primera acepción del Diccionario de la R.A.E. (1992) como “ofender a uno provocándolo o irritándolo con palabras o acciones”. Nos centraremos en la descortesía verbal, real o aparente, aludiendo a expresiones de carga léxica negativa como *¡vete a cagar!, ¡calla cabrío!, es que eres un egoísta, alcahueta, o no hace más que hablar sandeces*, y tendremos en cuenta la reacción del receptor al evaluar si hay *efectos de descortesía* o no. Estas expresiones son susceptibles de tener dos lecturas. Por un lado, una lectura más convencionalizada¹ que apela al efecto habitualmente interpretado como negativo y descortés (*descortesía auténtica*) dentro de una sociedad en concreto. Por otro lado, una lectura afiliativa², acaso menos convencionalizada, en la que dichas expresiones se ven despojadas del carácter lesivo y negativo, dependiendo de factores contextuales y situacionales. Queda, entonces, la descortesía sólo en las apariencias (*descortesía no auténtica*)³ revistiendo una función de refuerzo de la confianza y de consecución de una mayor afiliación interpersonal. No es, en rigor, descortesía; o al menos no lo es en esa situación en concreto. Pensamos que, en lo que a la sociedad española respecta, el grado de convencionalización de estas expresiones de efecto habitual negativo como vehículo

¹ Véase Bravo (2005) respecto a la codificación y convencionalización de las estrategias de cortesía.

² Esas lecturas pueden también ocurrir a la inversa: O sea, una expresión carente de connotaciones negativas puede, en determinada situación, ser usada y/o interpretada como negativa.

³ La descortesía constituiría aquí una *conducta política* (Locher y Watts 2005: 17) en el sentido de que sería la adecuada justamente a esa interacción en curso: bromas entre amigos jóvenes.

de significados afiliativos y solidarios con los interlocutores (en el sentido de señalar una afectividad positiva y corroborar que existe un alto grado de confianza entre ellos) sobrepasa los límites de un grupo en particular. Así, no son únicamente señas de identidad en el lenguaje juvenil masculino (Zimmermann 2003), sino que aparecen también en otros grupos sociales como personas de edades más avanzadas y entre mujeres (Bernal 2005; Albelda Marco, en este volumen).

2. Materiales de análisis

Nuestro corpus está constituido por las conversaciones coloquiales, que abarcan algo menos de seis horas de duración, del corpus general de español hablado del grupo *Val.Es.Co.* (Briz y Grupo Val.Es.Co. 2002), recogido en el área metropolitana de Valencia, España. Dentro del género oral conversacional, los *rasgos coloquiales* vienen definidos, según Briz y grupo Val.Es.Co. (2002: 18)⁴, por la no planificación de la producción de habla, la orientación a un fin interpersonal (no transaccional) y el tono informal. Además, la mayor o menor presencia de los siguientes rasgos determinan el mayor o menor grado de *coloquialidad*: Igualdad social y funcional entre los participantes; existencia de una relación de proximidad vivencial que supone una serie de conocimientos compartidos; marco físico de interacción conocido; y, finalmente, temática no especializada. Recurrimos también a un diálogo conflictivo procedente del corpus del programa televisivo *Gran Hermano* recopilado por Guerra Bernal (2002). Presentamos ejemplos reales de interacciones totalmente espontáneas no constreñidas por las limitaciones de saberse objeto de una investigación⁵, hecho que podría influir en el modo de expresarse los hablantes.

3. Apuntes teóricos generales

En este trabajo seguimos los lineamientos teóricos desarrollados en Bravo en este volumen (véase además Bravo 1999, 2003) referentes a los contenidos de imagen. Además, tendremos en cuenta la tipología de roles que Zimmerman (1998) propone como influyentes en una determinada situación, a saber, roles permanentes, situacionales y discursivos. Otro concepto que tenemos en cuenta es el de *contexto sociocultural* (Bravo 2003: 103-104), entendido como una parte del “contexto del usuario” y usado como herramienta metodológica para interpretar si un comportamiento es cortés o descortés en una interacción dada, y considerando además la *hipótesis sociocultural* o los conocimientos compartidos en determinada sociedad sobre cómo se concibe en su seno la relación interpersonal. Estas hipótesis crean expectativas sobre si el comportamiento comunicativo será evaluado como cortés, descortés o neutro. La influencia del contexto también la pone de relieve Briz (2004), quien distingue entre una *cortesía codificada*, vehiculada mediante mecanismos lingüísticos más o menos convencionalizados, como las fórmulas *gracias* o *por favor*, y una *cortesía interpretada*, evaluada en el transcurso de la interacción a partir de las reacciones de los

⁴ Remitimos al trabajo de Albelda Marco (en este volumen) para más detalles sobre los rasgos situacionales de las conversaciones.

⁵ En (1) los concursantes se saben observados por cámaras de televisión, pero al ser una observación continuada no parece que tenga mayor efecto sobre la interacción cotidiana entre ellos.

participantes. Es fundamental, por tanto, resaltar la interpretación que el receptor hace de la situación. Sobre este aspecto y la importancia del contexto en general también llama la atención Culpeper (2005).

4. La descortesía auténtica

Partiendo de Bravo (2005: 33, 34), proponemos una definición de descortesía que recoge algunos aspectos no contemplados en la definición que ofrece Culpeper (2005: 38), como son los saberes compartidos que posibilitan que el oyente interprete el sentido pretendido por el hablante. Así, desde mi perspectiva, la *descortesía* consiste en una actividad comunicativa cuya finalidad es dañar la imagen del otro y que responde a *códigos sociales* supuestamente compartidos por los hablantes. En todos los contextos considera el perjuicio del interlocutor. El efecto de esta actividad es interpersonalmente negativo, de lo cual se deduce que se ha producido una interpretación de la actividad como descortés. En el trabajo problematizamos el modelo de seis superestrategias paralelo a las estrategias de cortesía de Brown y Levinson ([1978] 1987) que propone Culpeper (Culpeper 2005: 41, 44): 1) descortesía descarnada, 2) descortesía positiva, 3) descortesía negativa, 4) sarcasmo, 5) ausencia de cortesía, 6) descortesía encubierta. Los aspectos problemáticos se derivan de la falta de correlato entre (in)dirección y gravedad de la descortesía: La primera estrategia, *bald on record impoliteness*, podría realizarse usando tanto estrategias de atenuación como sin ellas; por otro lado, pensamos que no todas las estrategias pertenecen al mismo nivel: La primera y la sexta estrategia no serían independientes en sí, sino que de alguna manera irían orientadas hacia la imagen negativa o hacia la positiva. A pesar de la dificultad para acceder a material que registre interacciones espontáneas descorteses, contamos con una interacción en el seno familiar caracterizada por un alto grado de conflicto entre los cónyuges y por frecuentes amenazas a la imagen⁶: Se gritan, se ridicultan, se lanzan reproches, abundan las repeticiones ecoicas de tono negativo, las expresiones de carga léxica negativa como *ya estoy hasta los cojones, ¡vete a cagar!*, o *¡me cago en la puta madre!* Usaremos el procedimiento metodológico delineado en Bravo (2005) consistente en emplear el *efecto de (des)cortesía* como categoría de análisis referida a la repercusión de un comportamiento en la relación interpersonal: Para calificar una actividad de cortés o descortés hay que considerar si efectivamente ha tenido tal efecto.

El ejemplo (1)⁷ procede del corpus recopilado por Guerra Bernal (2002) sobre el concurso televisivo *Gran Hermano*. Presenciamos una discusión entre dos participantes de sexo femenino. El rol actualizado en este caso para ambas sería el de contrincantes, dado el contexto situacional en el que se encuentran, un concurso cuya meta es ir eliminando a los participantes hasta quedar un único ganador:

- (1)
- P1: QUE ME TOCA LOS COJONES, COÑO/ me toca los cojones/
 R1: te me ca:lmas te me ca:lmas/ ((tono irónico) [la tilita que te bebiste ayer te la=

⁶ Albelda Marco (en este volumen) también encuentra en la grabación [RV.114.A.1] la existencia de lo que llama una *descortesía canónica*, frente a una *falsa descortesía* o *pseudodescortesía*; términos que básicamente corresponderían a los usados por nosotros: *descortesía auténtica* frente a *descortesía no auténtica*.

⁷ Ejemplo 3 en el artículo.

- P2: [que me da coraje de que él se va y todo el mundo habla/
- R2: =tomas/ a mí no me grites patricia/
- P3: es que me da coraje raquel que cuando [se va (...)]/
- R3: [pues vale, patricia/ pues grítale a él/
[GRAN HERMANO]

Esta secuencia se inserta en una interacción altamente agresiva producida por la discusión sobre una de las pruebas que los concursantes del programa tienen que superar. Patricia, en alusión a uno de los concursantes, usa una expresión con tono de voz alto y repetida enfáticamente en P1, *me toca los cojones*, que se podría pensar restrictiva de hablantes masculinos, pero vemos que no siempre es así⁸. La reacción de Raquel en R1 es responder de modo ofensivo usando un tono irónico para decirle enfáticamente a Patricia que se tranquilice, *te me calmas*, usando un presente por un imperativo e insertando el pronombre “afectivo”⁹ *me*, o más bien pseudoafectivo aquí, que refuerza su postura e ironiza esa afectividad. Después, con *la tilita que te bebiste ayer*, usa una expresión que, aunque no contiene ninguna palabra que en principio pueda ser ofensiva, crea una implicatura (*off-record impoliteness*) que sigue incidiendo en que Patricia está nerviosa, “histérica” y no es capaz de controlarse ni siquiera bajo los efectos de la tila.

5. Interacciones aparentemente descorteses: Estrategia de afiliación interpersonal

Diferentes autores han constatado la existencia de insultos rituales (Labov 1972) y de descortesía sin intención de ofender, *mock impoliteness* (Culpeper 1996, 2005, Culpeper *et alii* 2003). Es lo que en este trabajo hemos llamado *descortesía no auténtica*, con estrategias usadas como técnica para crear un ambiente relajado entre los interlocutores (Kienpointner 1997: 262) y señalar solidaridad grupal. Klaus Zimmermann (2003: 49), frente a los insultos definidos como “actos intencionalmente amenazadores o deteriorantes de identidad”, contrapone los actos comunicativos *anticorteses* que, aunque amenazan la identidad del otro, no provocan ofensa –aunque se podría arguir que si no tienen el *efecto* de causar ofensa, no serían propiamente amenazadores de la identidad, visto desde el grupo mismo–. La función de estos actos es representar una actividad antinormativa presente en el lenguaje de los jóvenes (Zimmermann 2003: 57), quienes gestionan la constitución de una *identidad generacional* (juvenil y masculina, concretamente) mediante estrategias de anticortesía (Zimmermann 2003: 58). Usos similares han sido observados entre adultos: *Calla cabrito, ¡joder! estas reuniones en lugares cerraos me jodéis el cáncer ¡coño!, estos que se jodian* [J.82.A.1], y también en hablantes de sexo femenino: *¡qué cabrón!* [PG.119.A.1], *¡ah maricón!* ([AP.80.A.1])¹⁰, por mencionar algunos. El elemento que tienen en común tales situaciones es la existencia de una relación de amistad entre los participantes en la interacción. Pensamos

⁸ La palabra *cojones* significa “testículos”. Con esta expresión la hablante muestra enfado.

⁹ Vigara Tauste (1992: 145) se refiere al énfasis funcional ejercido por estos pronombres, con los que “lejos de indicar una supuesta modestia [...] en realidad el hablante refuerza cara al interlocutor su adhesión personal a lo manifestado”.

¹⁰ Si bien una cuestión de grado sí puede estar presente: la referencia continua a cuestiones sexuales puede ser más frecuente en grupos de hablantes del mismo sexo, y así, en la conversación [H.38.A.1], estar relacionada con aspectos de identidad masculina.

que dichos comportamientos aparentemente descorteses responden a una estrategia conversacional para mostrar afiliación y cercanía que sobrepasa los límites generacionales y de sexo. Ejemplificamos esto en (2)¹¹ con una situación extraída de una conversación entre amigos que pertenecen a una asociación Desempeñan el rol situacional de amigos. Respecto al rol discursivo, Julio hace una broma, a la que responde Alicia:

- (2)
- | | | |
|-----|--|-----------------------|
| A1: | yo me he apuntao ahi/ y] al niño también lo he apuntao | |
| S1: | ¿qué lees/ [el Muy Interesante?] ¹² | |
| A2: | [en El Ocaso] | |
| J1: | El Ocaso/ con el nombre que tiene ya↓ °(Ocaso)° | |
| A3: | (RISAS)// ¡ah↓ ma- maricón! | |
| L1: | ¡ay!/ oye↓ ¿y'has abierto aquí o no? (4") | [AP.80.A.1] (177-181) |

Alicia ha contratado un seguro de enterramiento en la compañía de seguros El Ocaso. Julio en J1 hace una broma a raíz del significado de la palabra *ocaso*¹³. Alicia en A1 ratifica la broma con risas y con una expresión *¡ah maricón!*, que no causa tensión alguna entre ellos, ya que cambian de tema y continúan hablando en tono distendido. No produce, por tanto, efecto de descortesía alguno. Lo acontecido aquí está en la línea de las observaciones realizadas por Stenström y Jørgensen (en este volumen), que encuentran en las conversaciones¹⁴ entre adolescentes madrileños insultos usados como modo lúdico de comunicación fática.

6. Conclusiones

Nuestro objetivo ha sido, por un lado, observar algunas expresiones como *alcahueta*, *egoísta*, *maricón*, que, en concordancia con su significado no marcado, suponen unos contenidos convencionalmente negativos que pueden dañar a la imagen ajena, y en su uso más habitual se pueden catalogar como *descorteses*. Por otro lado, hemos constatado la existencia de un uso de estas expresiones que no recae en el ámbito de la descortesía, sino que es interpretado como señal de afiliación entre los participantes. Hemos señalado la importancia de tener en cuenta el efecto interpersonal que el insulto real o aparente tenga en la interacción, lo cual será decisivo para la interpretación de un posible *efecto de descortesía* o no. Recapitulamos en el siguiente cuadro revisando las situaciones presentadas en el artículo, según diferentes planos:

¹¹ Ejemplo 5 en el artículo en inglés.

¹² Se trata de una revista de divulgación científica.

¹³ “Decadencia, declinación, acabamiento”, según el diccionario de la R.A.E.

¹⁴ Corpus de Lenguaje Adolescente de Madrid (COLAm) de la Universidad de Bergen (Noruega), véase Stenström y Jørgensen, en este volumen.

	<i>Plano pragmático</i>	<i>Plano sociológico</i>	<i>Efecto impersonal</i>
Desc. auténtica	Disociación prosódica	Rol: familiares	Reelaboración discursiva
Desc. auténtica	Elevación tono voz	Rol: familiares	Reelaboración discursiva
Desc. auténtica	Elevación tono voz	Rol: contrincantes	Reelaboración discursiva
Desc. no aut.	Risas	Rol: amigos	Sin incidencia negativa
Desc. no aut.	Exclamación, risas	Rol: amigos	Sin incidencia negativa
Desc. no aut.	Exclamación	Rol: amigos	Sin incidencia negativa
Desc. no aut.	Risas	Rol: amigos	Sin incidencia negativa

Tabla 1. *Planos de análisis.*

Estas expresiones aparentemente descorteses no causan un daño en la imagen del receptor ni tienen consecuencias negativas en la relación interpersonal. El detonante de su uso es una relación de camaradería, una muy sustentada amistad que sale aún más reforzada con el uso de expresiones que muestran que “entre nosotros todo está permitido”. Ello, si bien puede suceder más intensamente en grupos de jóvenes de sexo masculino, se observa también en otros grupos generacionales y de género, suponiendo en todos ellos una estrategia conversacional afiliativa que sirve para expresar familiaridad y confianza entre los hablantes en función de su rol de amistad.

DO INSULTS ALWAYS INSULT? GENUINE IMPOLITENESS VERSUS NON-GENUINE IMPOLITENESS IN COLLOQUIAL SPANISH

María Bernal

Until not so long ago, when somebody decided to call someone an imbecile, he or she was ready to accept the immediate consequences of the issue. Now, anyone can call you anything, bastard for example, with a high percentage of impunity, and even your best friend can greet you with a hello, dickhead. In this country, even our insults of all life have been decaffeinated.

Pérez Reverte 1998: 123

Abstract

This study is based mainly on conversations extracted from a corpus of spoken Spanish gathered in the metropolitan area of Valencia, Spain (Briz and Val.Es.Co Group 2002). Adopting a socio-pragmatic perspective (Bravo and Briz 2004), our purpose is to describe the *social effects* produced by the use of certain strategies related to (im)politeness phenomena in face-to-face interaction with the ongoing negotiation of participants' *face* (Goffman 1967).

We will refer in this paper to Culpeper's concept of *authentic impoliteness* (1996, 2003, 2005), aimed at describing the damage of a hearer's *face*. For this author, insults constitute intentionally threatening acts. However, in our study we found that some expressions commonly used for insulting or mocking can, in certain contexts, produce an *affiliative social effect*, strengthening feelings of solidarity within a group and of closeness between interlocutors. We call this use *non-authentic impoliteness*. Kienpointner (1997) and Culpeper (*op. cit.*) identify this impoliteness as *mock impoliteness*. In turn, Zimmermann (2003) uses the term *anti-politeness* to refer to similar strategies of impoliteness. We follow Zimmermann's concept but without restricting it to the function of creating male teen identity only. This is because in the Spanish society we observe other groups in which such identity feature is absent. We also take into account Bravo's concepts relative to the crucial role of context to consider participants' expectations and shared knowledge in a given society, such as Bravo's *socio-cultural hypothesis* (2003: 104; Bravo, in this volume).

In our analysis of colloquial interactions, we have registered different linguistic realisations that can be classified as insults in their unmarked form. This unmarkedness is not present in all instances: In certain cases, for example, insults can encourage an interpersonal affiliation between participants. The markedness of insults depends on certain contextual factors (such as interactions between close friends) and an adequate socio-cultural contextualisation and textual co-textualisation. As mentioned above, this markedness would constitute realisations of *non-authentic impoliteness*. It seems then that there would be a principle of no offence between participants that characterises the communicative exchange.

Keywords: Colloquial Spanish; Insults; Face; Politeness; Impoliteness.

1. Introduction

The verb “to insult”, from Latin *insultāre* (“to jump against, to offend”), is defined in the first entry of the RAE Dictionary (1992) as “to offend someone by provoking or irritating through words or actions”. In this study, we consider possible offences that “provoke or irritate someone with words” through theoretical categories such as *real* and *apparent impoliteness*. More specifically, we will refer to expressions with a negative lexical load, as in the cases of *jvete a cagar!* ('fuck off!'), *jcalla cabrito!* ('shut up little bastard!'), *es que eres un egoísta* ('you're so selfish'), *alcahueta* ('snitch'), or *no hace más que hablar sandeces* ('you just talk bullshit'). We will take into account the receiver's verbal and non-verbal reactions when evaluating if these expressions cause *impoliteness effects* or not.

The focus of attention of this study is on words and expressions in Peninsular Spanish susceptible of having two readings. On the one hand, we refer to a conventionalized¹⁵ reading of certain expressions that, within a given society, have an effect usually interpreted as negative and impolite (*authentic impoliteness*). On the other hand, we refer to an affiliative reading¹⁶ of the same expressions that is less conventionalized. This reading considers that those expressions lack a harmful and negative nature, depending on contextual and situational factors. This is an apparent impoliteness only (*non-authentic impoliteness*)¹⁷ that pursues a greater interpersonal affiliation. We believe that impoliteness is not an intrinsic characteristic of given lexical expressions and grammatical resources (“impoliteness is not inherent in particular linguistic and non-linguistic signals”, Culpeper 2005: 41), so much so that it becomes necessary to consider prosodic and contextual features.

At least for the Spanish society, we think that the expressions mentioned above usually have a negative effect, although they can function as a vehicle to express affiliative meanings and solidarity between interlocutors (in the sense of signalling a positive affection and corroborating that there exists a high degree of *confianza*¹⁸ ‘trust’ between them). We also observe that these expressions are not only a mark of identity in the language of male teenagers (Zimmermann 2003), but also a feature present in other social groups, as for example in interactions between adults and females (Bernal 2005; Albelda Marco in this volume).

These assumptions lead us to distinguish two different phenomena that perhaps shouldn't be identified with the same term. Genuine impoliteness is a phenomenon that may escalate to verbal and even physical aggression: There is conscious aggression to the other, “it is sought to voluntarily destroy its face”¹⁹ (Álvarez Muro 2005: 57). The impoliteness that we referred to as *non-authentic* is not, strictly, impoliteness. At least it is not impoliteness compared to the former situation, but a particular interpersonal

¹⁵ See Bravo (2005) on the codification and conventionalisation of politeness strategies.

¹⁶ These readings can also occur conversely; that is, in a given situation an expression lacking negative connotations can be used and/or interpreted as negative.

¹⁷ Impoliteness would constitute here a *politic behaviour* (Locher and Watts 2005: 17) in the sense that it would be adequate to the on-going interaction: jokes between young male friends.

¹⁸ *Confianza* ‘trust’ is a communicative style quite genuine to the Hispanic culture that has been observed in interactional studies (Bravo 1996, 1999; Hernández-Flores 1999, 2002) and also in anthropological ones, as in Thurén (1988: 222). This author defines *confianza* ‘trust’ as *closeness or a sense of deep familiarity*.

¹⁹ As Álvarez Muro (2005: 59) mentions, volition would differentiate this impoliteness from a non-impoliteness that appears, for example, in rough behaviours by ignorance of the norms of a given speech community.

relation in which the interlocutor's face is not compromised and tends to reinforce participants' trust and affiliative feelings.

In what follows, we present our material of analysis in Section 2 and some theoretical notions in Section 3. In Sections 4 and 5 we refer both to theoretical notions on authentic and non-authentic impoliteness while analysing at the same time sequences extracted from our corpus. In Section 6, we draw some conclusions for our study.

2. Material of analysis

The material analysed is an extract from the corpus of colloquial conversations of spoken Spanish *Val.Es.Co.* (Briz and Val.Es.Co. Group 2002). The *Val.Es.Co* corpus was collected by a group of researchers from the universities of Valencia and Alicante in Spain to describe the colloquial register of interactions, the structure of conversation and its units. The total length of our extract is a little less than six hours of conversation. The conversations belong to a type of oral discourse characterised for being *dialogued* (it supposes a successions of exchanges between different speakers), *immediate* (it is produced in specific temporal and spatial points) and produced jointly with other participant(s) without the exchange being determined beforehand (Briz and Val.Es.Co. Group 2002: 18). The conversations are colloquial when the production of speech is not planned, there exists an orientation towards an interpersonal goal (a non-transactional one) and the tone is informal. According to Briz and the Val.Es.Co. Group (op. cit.), there are four features that determine the degree of *colloquiality* (this degree is more or less high according to the presence or not of such features): There is *social equality* between participants, there exists a close relation between them in terms of *shared knowledge*, there appears a known *physical frame* through which the situation progresses and, finally, the participants talk about *non-specialised conversational topics*. Table 1 organises the characteristics of the taped conversations that we have studied²⁰:

Conversation (pages)	Length	Place	Participants (relation)	Topics
[H.38.A.1] (pp. 49-71)	30 minutes	Beach	4 actives: Alfredo, Blas, Carlos, Dani (friends)	Meals, cinema, sex, casual encounters
[AP.80.A.1] (pp. 142-165)	50 minutes	Office of an association	5 actives: Salva, Alicia, Lola, Gabriel, Julio (friends)	Tobacco, sports, friends
[ML.84.A.1] (pp. 72-80)	10 minutes	Home	2 actives: Andrés, Blanca (boyfriend and girlfriend), (2 passives: Cristina, Dolores; friends)	Quarrels: problems in their sentimental relation
[J.82.A.1] (pp. 166-189)	30 minutes	Home	4 actives: Alberto, Gerardo, Vicente, Sergio (friends), (2 passives: Javi and Elisa, Alberto's son and wife)	Professionals, politics, letters
[RV.114.A.1] (pp. 291-306)	11 minutes	Home	3 actives: Álvaro, Bernardo, Clara (family), (1 passive: Desiré: granddaughter)	Illnesses
[VC.117.A.1] (pp. 321-334)	21 minutes	Home	3 actives: Ada, Berta, César (family)	Christmas meals

²⁰ See Albelda Marco (in this volume) for more details on the situational features that determine the degree of colloquiality of conversations.

[PG.119.A.1] (pp. 275-290)	20 minutes	Holiday Home	4 actives: Marisa, Pili, Felipe, Joaquín (two married couples who are friends)	Trips, dieting plans
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Table 1. Description of the taped conversations for this study (Briz and Val. Es. Co. Group 2002). Participants' names are fictional.

The accessibility to interactions that are predominantly impolite is usually limited, but we have identified in our material some situations where impoliteness is believed to be present. We also analysed a highly conflictive dialogue (example 3) extracted from a corpus of the TV show *Big Brother*, compiled by Guerra Bernal (2002). We present real examples of completely spontaneous interactions; that is to say, conversations not constrained by the limitations of being acknowledged as a research object²¹, something that would influence the way speakers express themselves.

3. General theoretical notes

Research on impoliteness has come rather late to the already produced in the field of politeness, considering the ground-breaking studies of Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987). Lately, there has been a certain distancing from Brown and Levinson's postulates, at least from those concerning the universality of face and its contents (Matsumoto 1988, 2003; Bravo 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004; Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2003, among others). This theory is criticised for having an essentially pessimist vision on interaction, as it is centred on the mitigation of *face threatening acts* without considering *face flattering acts* (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1996, 2004; Albelda Marco 2003, 2004, 2007; Hernández Flores 2002, 2004). Moreover, little attention is paid to those strategies oriented towards impoliteness (Culpeper 1996, 2005; Eelen 2001; Culpeper *et al.* 2003).

The notion of politeness is necessarily present in our discussion. Many researchers have found it important to represent the phenomena as a bipolar continuum with politeness and impoliteness at the extremes. It is the case of Kaul ([1992] 2003: 13), who understands politeness and impoliteness as two opposing values for the same function. In the same line, Kienpointner (1997) places the politeness/impoliteness pair on the axis of cooperation and competition. Other authors, however, do not consider politeness and impoliteness as opposite sides of the same token, as for example Locher and Watts (2005). These authors understand (im)politeness as a broader entity identified with *relational work*: "We propose that relational work, the 'work' individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others, which includes impolite as well as polite or merely appropriate behaviour, is a useful concept to help investigate the discursive struggle over politeness" (Locher and Watts 2005: 9). As it is already difficult to define politeness (both for its instability along time and its inter- and intra-cultural variability, as well as for individual differences even within the same socio-cultural community), we think that it can be more productive to analyse impoliteness as an independent phenomenon and not by merely opposing it to politeness.

²¹ In (3), the contestants know they are being observed through the TV cameras, but as it is a continuous observation it seems that cameras do not have a great incidence on their daily interactions.

3.1. Face

The psycho-sociological notion of *face* has been used since Ancient China times (Watts 2003: 119). It refers to an individual's qualities and/or to abstractions such as "respect", "self-esteem", "honour", etc. Goffman (1967) uses the term *face* in his theory of social interaction, defining it as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for [her/himself] by the line others assume [he/she] has taken during a particular contact" (Goffman 1967: 5). For Goffman, *face* is not something individual, intrinsic and static, but it is rather identified in reference to other people. The socio-cultural rules of a given group and the particular characteristics of the encounter both delimit the weight given to the faces involved during interaction. In other words, the concept of face is not concretely located; it emanates from the flow of incidents produced during the encounter and in the interpretations made for those incidents (Goffman 1967: 7).

Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987) elaborate on Goffman's notion of face by assigning it a sense of individual property and differentiating two universal aspects: A *negative* one, correlated with the need (*face wants*) of not suffering impositions and having freedom of action, and a *positive* one, related to the want of being accepted by others²². The potential threats to face that supposedly emerge from interaction are mitigated through politeness strategies aimed at one or the other aspect of face. We will discuss in Section 4 how this model is applied in the analysis of impoliteness by Culpeper (1996, 2005) and Culpeper *et al.* (2003).

Bravo (1999, 2003, in this volume) does not agree with the idea of assigning universal contents to the notion of face. As an alternative, she proposes the existence of an *autonomy face* and an *affiliative face*²³ with contents that are restricted to the socioculture of production. According to Bravo (2003: 106), the *autonomy face* comprises behaviours relative to "how a person wishes to see him or herself and to be seen by others as an individual with a contour of its own within a group". In the Spanish society, for example, this is reflected in contents that express *autoafirmación* 'self-assertion', *originalidad* 'originality' and *autoestima* 'self-esteem'. The affiliative face consists on behaviours that signal how a person wishes to see him or herself and to be seen by others with features that identify him or her with the group. This would be expressed as *consideración* 'consideration', *afecto* 'affection' and *confianza* 'trust'²⁴. It would also be important to add the notion of *face role* (Bravo 2004: 29), a variable that refers to the multiplicity of roles that speakers play in daily interactions. Following Zimmerman (1998), we can differentiate three types of roles that influence a given situation: (a) *transportable identities*, roles based on socio-cultural characteristics such as physical features and/or cultural (for example, sex and age); b) *situational identities*, roles close to a concrete communicative situation (a conference, an informal conversation, etc.); and c) *discourse identities*, discursive roles that alternate recurrently

²² Matsumoto (1988) criticises the division between negative and positive face, as the author considers that it is impossible to assign universal contents to the negative face postulated by Brown and Levinson. Spencer-Oatey also questions this division and presents an alternative model (2000, 2003) called *rappor management*, re-elaborated in turn by Fant and Granato (2002).

²³ Arundale (MS, p. 12) considers that the dialectics in the notions of affiliation and autonomy (*connectedness* vs. *separateness*) provides a justified starting point for a productive reinterpretation of the concept of *face*.

²⁴ As we have already mentioned, the contents involving *confianza* 'trust' have also been studied by Hernández Flores (1999, 2002).

during an interaction: A speaker that asks and one who answers, an advisor and an advisee, and many others.

3.2. *The use in context*

Bravo (2003: 103-104) supports the use of a *socio-cultural context* (understood as part of a “context of the user”) as a methodological tool to interpret if a certain behaviour is polite or impolite in a given interaction. Apart from other variables (such as the communicative situation or the participants’ particular characteristics), it is necessary to consider what this author calls *socio-cultural hypothesis*; that is, the shared knowledge in a specific society about the way an interaction should progress and about how an interpersonal relation is understood. These hypothesis create expectations on whether the communicative behaviour can be evaluated as polite, impolite or neutral. The influence of context is also observed in Briz (2004), who identifies a *codified politeness*, manifested through more or less conventionalised linguistic mechanisms such as the formula “please”, and an *interpreted politeness*²⁵, evaluated during interaction according to participants’ reactions. Therefore, a request addressed as a plain exhortation, such as *jyee pasa las papas!* ‘hey, pass the potatoes’, is not impolite if the participants do not interpret the expression in such a way. This kind of politeness (and we could add, impoliteness) is considered in dialogic units, so that it is important to distinguish between:

[...] a speaker’s politeness and a hearer’s politeness that can be evaluated from reactions only and, therefore, from the exchange of dialogic units. A polite (or impolite) activity can only be considered taking into account those reactions. (Briz 2003: 26-27)

It is therefore fundamental to focus on the interpretation a receiver makes of the situation. This aspect and the importance of context in general are also stressed by Culpeper (2005) when evaluating why impoliteness can be entertaining. The author analyses if the context of those televised shows²⁶ based on sarcasms and face-threatening acts is capable of putting impoliteness out. Context is defined according to the *activity type* being performed (Levinson 1992, cited by Culpeper 2005: 65), so that any given expression can be polite or impolite according to the activity participants are engaged in. In Culpeper’s corpus, the show is a game, a media spectacle, and the impolite behaviour of the show’s presenter is a fiction. As a consequence, the impoliteness being produced in the show should not be interpreted as authentic. However, after studying the contestants’ answers and their non-verbal reactions (nervous laughter, avoiding eye-contact), Culpeper concludes that the prominence of “impolite” signals give evidence of the fact that contestants are interpreting the presenter’s impolite behaviour as genuine. They feel offended even in contexts where theoretically they shouldn’t be. This is due to the impossibility of mitigating some impolite behaviours (Culpeper 2005: 69).

²⁵ Equivalent notions to Haugh’s (2003) *anticipated vs. inferred politeness*.

²⁶ He refers to *The Weakest Link*, “an ‘exploitative’ show, designed to humiliate contestants” (Culpeper 2005: 35), first broadcast by the British network BBC on 2000, with a total of 68 daily episodes and increased to 111 ones due to the great success of the show.

In the situation described above, we believe that the context of *non-familiarity* is more important than anything else as, although the contestants know they are in a TV show, they find themselves, after all, among strangers. We can extrapolate this situation to a conversation between male friends (see Section 5). Their relation is of familiarity and great *confianza* ‘trust’, so that the fact of calling each other names such as *sirvienta* ‘maid’, or any other feminine nickname, does not seem to offend the interlocutors –not even the cross-accusations of having “abnormal” sexual relations. In this conversation, the characteristics of a concrete situation of use prevail. However, we should admit the possibility of a participant that rejects being the object of jokes or a participant being hurt and taking offence for a given remark. It is not possible to extrapolate the interpretation of impoliteness from one situation to another without taking into account the specific features of each interaction.

4. Authentic impoliteness

Culpeper (op. cit.) defines impoliteness as follows²⁷:

Impoliteness comes about when: (1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behaviour as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2) (Culpeper 2005: 38).

In this definition, features (1) and (2) appear in such a disjunctive relation that they deny one another if one condition is satisfied during interaction. It is possible to find impoliteness when “the speaker intentionally communicates a face attack” but without taking into account the presence of the hearer as a crucial element for the perception and interpretation of the impolite action. This being so albeit the author indicates that impoliteness, as well as politeness, is constructed in interaction between speaker and hearer (Culpeper 2005: 38), even though he advocates all along his paper the need of including the hearer’s perspective. In Culpeper’s definition, it is possible to argue that if only feature (1) is satisfied (in other words, if the hearer does not perceive the action as intentionally threatening) then it is not possible to strictly refer to an “impoliteness effect” (Bravo 2003: 17). It is necessary for the interlocutor to perceive the situation as impolite to effectively interpret it as such, as Eelen (2001)²⁸ states when considering the hearer’s evaluation of impoliteness. We will try to justify this: Culpeper (2005: 42) takes an example from Leech (1983) to illustrate a strategy that the author refers to as *sarcasm or mock politeness*, meaning the use of a formula of politeness with the intention of being impolite. The formula is *DO help yourself (won’t you?)* addressed to somebody that started to serve him or herself in a meal before he or she was invited to do so. Nonetheless, for this person to understand the irony in Leech’s sense, or the sarcasm in Culpeper’s sense, he or she must know the social rules pertinent to that

²⁷ In a previous study, impoliteness is defined as “communicative strategies designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony” (Culpeper *et al.* 2003: 1546), a definition that the same author finds problematic as it does not make clear what is conflict or disharmony and for not considering the receiver’s actions (Culpeper 2005: 38).

²⁸ Eelen (2001: 249) proposes a change on how (im)politeness is studied. Instead of focusing on the production of impolite behaviour, this author finds it necessary to pay attention to the production of (im)polite evaluations, reformulating the traditional question ‘why are people (im)polite?’ to ‘why are people evaluating each other as (im)polite?’.

situation. Also, the person who produces the formula must know that the receiver will go beyond the surface of the expression and decipher the intentional contents of his or her words according to certain social rules. In our view, Culpeper's definition does not pay enough attention to the shared knowledge that makes it possible for the hearer to interpret the meaning intended by the speaker. We propose, based on Bravo's (2005)²⁹ definition of politeness, a definition of impoliteness that reflects such an element:

Impoliteness consists on a “communicative activity that aims at damaging the face of others, according to social codes supposedly shared by speakers. It considers a damage to the interlocutor in every context. The effect of this activity is interpersonally negative, so it is deduced that an interpretation of such an activity as being impolite has been produced.”

This definition would cover feature (2) in Culpeper's definition as well as feature (1) when taking into account a damage to the face as the aim of the activity. It also includes shared social codes, but avoids the inclusion of certain rough or inadequate behaviours produced by ignorance of the norms. As regards the distinction between authentic and non-authentic impoliteness, the latter clearly falls out of our definition.

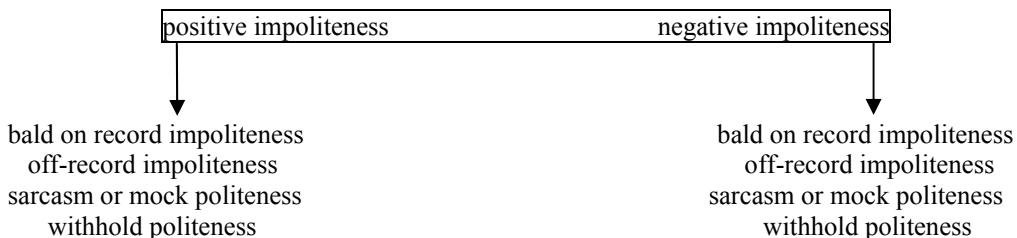
Culpeper (op. cit.) reelaborates Brown and Levinson's model of politeness strategies and adds another category, *off-record impoliteness*. His model of impoliteness now comprises six superstrategies (Culpeper 2005: 41, 44): 1) *bald on record impoliteness*, with the clear intention of damaging the other's face; 2) *positive impoliteness*, aimed at damaging positive face wants by means of strategies such as using taboo words or seeking disagreement by selecting sensitive topics; 3) *negative impoliteness*, aimed at damaging negative face wants using strategies such as belittling the other with diminutives or explicitly associating the other with negative aspects; 4) *sarcasm or mock politeness*, the use of politeness that is evidently insincere; 5) *withhold politeness*, in situations where politeness would be expected, as when a present is given; 6) *off-record impoliteness*, with indirect forms based on implicatures that, according to the author, end up being more offensive.

There are two aspects we consider problematic in Culpeper's proposal. On the one hand, his model lacks a correlation between (in)direction and the gravity of impoliteness: Strategy 1, *bald on record impoliteness*, could be performed both by using mitigating strategies or by not using them; in other words, an interlocutor may have the clear intention of damaging the interlocutor's face even if his or her utterance is mitigated. This is showed by Bravo (2002) when analysing some assertive acts so conflictive that it is not possible to achieve effects of politeness despite the interlocutors' efforts to mitigate those acts³⁰. On the other hand, in Culpeper's model not all strategies are at the same level: The distinction between positive and negative strategies (strategies 2 and 3) –if such differentiation is accepted– would correspond to a different level. Strategies 1 (*bald on record impoliteness*) and 6 (*off-record impoliteness*) would not constitute independent strategies in themselves but they would

²⁹ “Politeness can be defined as *a communicative activity that aims at quedar bien con el otro* ‘to compliment the other’ (literally, ‘to be well with the other’) *and that follows norms and social codes that are supposedly known by speakers. This type of activity considers in every context the interlocutor's benefit. The effect of this activity in interaction is interpersonally positive*” (Bravo 2005: 34; italics in the original).

³⁰ The indirection is considered as a mitigating strategy with the aim of softening the negative interpersonal effect of the threat.

rather be oriented towards a negative face or a positive one. Based on the same examples provided by Culpeper (1996: 357-358), the strategies “seeking disagreement by selecting sensitive topics” (positive impoliteness output) or “showing disdain” (negative impoliteness output) could be effected in a direct mode or in a covert mode or sarcastically, etc., as we see in the following diagram:



It is difficult to access highly impolite spontaneous interactions. For this reason, researchers more often than not analyse impoliteness resorting to literary works or other types of discourses³¹. We have gathered for our corpus an exchange between family members characterised by a high degree of conflict between the spouses and by frequent face threats³². They shout, ridicule and criticise each other, echoic repetitions abound in a negative tone, and expressions are loaded negatively, such as, for example, *ya estoy hasta los cojones* ‘my bullocks are fucking fed up!’, *¡vete a cagar!* ‘fuck off!’ or *me cago en la puta madre!* ‘Goddamit!’. Culpeper (1996: 354) affirms there is certain evidence that genuine impoliteness tends to occur more frequently in intimate relations, sometimes escalating to verbal aggressions and physical violence. Kaul (2005) analyses impoliteness as a *modus vivendi* in her study on *intragroupal-chronic impoliteness* in family situations where continuous face attacks and aggressions are common. This is possible because in a family space “the interactants can release themselves without reticence and free of social sanctions” (Kaul 2005: 169). In those interactions, the unmarked feature is to use impoliteness as a strategy of minimum risk and maximum benefit for the user’s interest through strategies such as mockeries, insults, disqualifying comments, reproaches, misrepresentations, victimising, among others (Kaul 2005: 178).

In what follows we will present some situations to illustrate our arguments. We will keep to Bravo’s (2005) methodological framework when referring to the notion of (*im*)politeness effect. This framework is understood as an analytic category to describe the consequences of a certain behaviour in a situated interpersonal relation. The characterisation of an activity as polite or impolite is put forward only if a given behaviour has had such an effect on the interlocutors involved.

Example (1) presents an interaction between some family members, including father, mother and daughter; more precisely, the sequence occurs between the spouses. In this communicative situation, the roles of the one who criticizes and of the one who answers back are discursively interchanged. Impoliteness results from lexical choices: the conventional effect of using the word *alcahueta* ‘snitch’ is negative and face

³¹ Culpeper (1996) analyses impoliteness in *Macbeth*, Kienpointner (1997) in *Who’s afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and in a poem from Catulus. In Spanish, Kaul considers impoliteness in the discourses of tangos and in the play *Chumbale* (2005) and *Cordisco* (2005) in the play *Años difíciles*, just to mention but a few examples.

³² Albelda Marco (in this volume) also finds in the recording [RV.114.A.1] the existence of what she calls a *canonical impoliteness*, differentiating it from a *false impoliteness* or *pseudo-impoliteness*. These terms would basically correspond to *authentic impoliteness* and *non-authentic impoliteness*.

threatening, if it is not counter-effected by contextual characteristics (as for example friends who are joking):

(1) (VC.117.A.1) (177-194)

- B1: ((Teo)) mira que tiene maal ¿eh? yogur³³/ tiene mal yogur grande§
 C1: §º(alcahueta)º
 B2: ¡cállate ya!//(2") no hace más que hablar/ º(sandeces)º
 C2: º(((yo no soy una sola vez)))º ¿eh?

(1) (VC.117.A.1) (177-194)

- B1: ((Teo)) look that it has got baad uh? yogurt³⁴/ it has got bad yogurt big §
 C1: §º(snitch)º
 B2: shut up right away!//(2") he just talks/ º(bullshit)º
 C2: º(((i'm not just once only)))º uh?

The spouses Berta and César talk during a meal. César makes a hurtful remark in C1, *alcahueta* ‘snitch’, with an impoliteness effect that we interpret according to Berta’s negative reaction in B2. She confronts offensively by urging him to shut up through an imperative and adding a disqualifying comment *no hace más que hablar sandeces* ‘he just talks bullshit’ that threatens C’s face. As already explained, our definition of impoliteness proposed in Section 3 considered impoliteness as a communicative activity that aims at damaging the interlocutor’s face with an intent of harm and that carries an interpersonal negative effect, as the turn in B2 does. The contrary effect (that is, not having a perception of impoliteness) would have been possible if Berta had answered back César’s comment with a joke.

In (2), we analyse a row between a couple. The tension diffuses throughout the discussion due to the uncertainty on the continuity of the relation. The adopted social roles are of boyfriend and girlfriend. Also, and from a discursive plane, the roles adopted are the one who criticises and the one who answers back the criticisms. To qualify the other as selfish would require actions oriented to protect face through, for example, hedges, mitigation or repairs. None of these actions are produced in the following exchange:

(2) (ML.84.A.1) (208-217)

- A1: PERO ES MI PROBLEMA
 B1: PUES BUENO↓ ENTONCES ERES UN EGOÍSTA/ ANDRÉS/ CARIÑO/ ES
 QUE ¡JODER!//(3") es que eres un egoísta tú y tú y tú↑ y tú y tú↑ te encierras y
 tú eres todo/ ¡coño! pues si no compartes conmigo las cosas no sé qué
 [cojones quieres que te diga]
 A2: [VALE↓ LO SIENTO↓] LO SIENTO§
 B2: § ES VERDAD↓ [ES QUE=]
 A3: [LO SIENTO]

(2) (ML.84.A.1) (208-217)

- A1: BUT IT'S MY PROBLEM
 B1: SO OKAY↓ THEN YOU'RE SO SELFISH/ ANDRÉS/ DARLING/ IT'S THAT
 FUCK!//(3") it's that you're so SELfish you and you and you↑ and you and

³³ Instead of “milk”. The idiomatic expression is *tener mala leche*, literally ‘to have bad milk’; that is, to have a bad temper or bad intentions.

you↑ you shut yourself off and it's all about you/ shit! if you don't share with me
your things i don't know what [the fuck you want me to tell you]

- A2: [OKAY↓ I'M SORRY↓] I'M SORRY§
B2: §IT'S
TRUE↓ [IT'S THAT=]
A3: [I'M SORRY]

Blanca calls her boyfriend *egoísta* ‘selfish’ raising her tone of voice in B1. Even though she uses elements with a habitual mitigating function (such as the use of the endearment vocative *cariño*³⁵ ‘darling’), she also stresses her utterance by showing annoyance in *es que joder!* ‘it's that fuck!’, accusing him of being selfish in *es que eres un egoísta* ‘it's that you're so selfish’, repeating incisively *tú y tú y tú y tú* ‘you and you and you and you’ and making explicit the idea of him being selfish in *te encierras y tú eres todo* ‘you shut yourself off and it's all about you’. Also, she adds expressions that suggest her emotional state (*jcoño!* ‘fuck!'; *qué cojones quieres que te diga* ‘what the fuck you want me to tell you’). According to Culpeper *et al.* (2003)³⁶, who registers the interlocutor's possible reactions when confronted with impoliteness, Andrés' attitude is to show acceptance in A2: He assumes his responsibility by apologising in *vale lo siento* ‘okay I'm sorry’, an expression that is repeated several times and that, consequently, increases the face damage.

The example in (3) is extracted from the corpus collected by the researcher Nuria Guerra Bernal (2002). It consists on video-taped recordings of the television show *Big Brother* broadcast in Spain in 2002. We have kept the transcription conventions, partially based on Val.Es.Co corpus. The exchange is an argument between two female participants. The roles adopted in this case would be of *opponents*, given the situational context in which the participants find themselves (the objective of the show is to expel a participant in each episode till there are five left only):

(3) (GRAN HERMANO)

- P1: QUE ME TOCA LOS COJONES, COÑO/ me toca los cojones/
R1: te me caalmas te me caalmas/ ((tono irónico) [la tilita que te bebiste ayer te la=
P2: [que me da coraje de que él se va
y todo el mundo habla/
R2: =tomas/ a mí no me grites patricia/
P3: es que me da coraje raquel que cuando [se va (...)]/
R3: [pues vale, patricia/ pues GRÍTALE
A ÉL/

(3) (BIG BROTHER)

- P1: THIS FUCKS ME OFF/ this fucks me off³⁷
R1: you calm down, you calm down/ ((ironic tone)) [the little linden tea³⁸ you drunk
yesterday you=

³⁵ The meaning of *cariño* ‘darling’ is interpersonally positive in its conventional use, but the context of the situation makes it negative.

³⁶ Impoliteness can be dealt with the absence or presence of a response. In the first case, there is silence. In the second case, this response can accept the impolite action or confront it in an offensive or defensive manner (Culpeper *et al.* 2003: 1563). These strategies, according to Culpeper (2005: 68), can be further expanded.

³⁷ More literally, ‘IT CRACKS MY BOLLOCKS, FUCK/ it cracks my bollocks/’

³⁸ *Linden tea* is a herbal tea popular among certain Spanish-speaking communities for its supposedly relaxing properties. In English-speaking communities, chamomile tea is also believed to have the same properties.

- P2: [it makes me mad that he's leaving and
everybody speaks/
- R2: =drink it/ don't shout at me patricia/
- P3: it makes me mad raquel that when [he leaves (...)]/
- R3: [okay then, patricia/ so SHOUT AT HIM/

This sequence is part of a highly aggressive interaction between interlocutors when discussing about one of the tests a contestant must undertake in the show. Patricia, referring to another contestant, uses an expression in P1, uttered in a highly and emphatically repeated tone of voice: *Me toca los cojones* ‘it fucks me off [it cracks my bollocks]’. This expression could be restricted to male speakers, but we see here that it is not always like that³⁹. Raquel’s reaction in R1 is to answer back offensively by using an ironic tone to emphatically tell Patricia to calm down (*te me calmas* ‘you calm down’). Raquel uses the present tense in her utterance instead of the imperative and inserting in Spanish the “affective”⁴⁰ or pseudo-affective pronoun *me* (the English version tries to reflect this by making the pronoun ‘you’ explicit). The inclusion of the Spanish pronoun *me* reinforces Raquel’s position and she can be ironic on being affective with Patricia. Then, in *la tilita que te bebiste ayer* (‘the little linden tea you drunk yesterday’), R1 uses an expression that, although it hasn’t got an offensive word (at least in principle), creates an implicature (*off-record impoliteness*) that insists on Patricia being nervous, “hysterical”, incapable of controlling herself even under the effects of the linden tea, and that Patricia would need to drink more of that tea. We can recognise here a covert impoliteness, already described by Culpeper (op. cit.). We agree with the author that the effect of this more indirect form can be even more evident if Raquel would have said that Patricia was nervous only. Then, Raquel adds in R2 *a mí no me grites* ‘don’t shout at me’, an expression that informs on Patricia’s attitude in P1, rejecting that behaviour.

5. Apparently impolite interactions: The strategy of interpersonal affiliation

Having in mind the ritualistic insults studied by Labov (1972), Culpeper (1996, 2005) mentions that *mock impoliteness* or *banter* is a form of impoliteness that remains on the surface so that there is no intention of offence (Culpeper 1996: 352). This form of behaviour is consequently excluded from the set of impoliteness strategies. Kienpointner (1997) presents a typology of *communicative rudeness* that describes different types of impoliteness according to the degree of cooperativeness. In this way, the researcher includes ritualistic insults and behaviours that he labels as *simulated rudeness*, a similar description to Culpeper’s *mock impoliteness* or what we have identified in this paper as *non-authentic* impoliteness. All accounts agree on the use of

³⁹ The word *cojones* (in the literal translation: ‘bollocks’) stands for “testicles”, an expression that the speaker uses to show her annoyance. Another expression that refers to a male sexual feature appears in [ML.84.A1]. On this occasion, the speaker wants to communicate that she is “fed up” and says *yo estoy hasta la polla* ‘I’m fed up all up to my dick’, an expression that is perhaps less conventionalised than the former. Its use would collide with certain expectations for the role of a woman, evidenced thanks to the reaction of the male interlocutor: *va, no seas ridícula* ‘come on, don’t be ridiculous’.

⁴⁰ Vigara Tauste (1992: 145) refers to the functional emphasis that these pronouns provide: “far from signalling a false modesty [...] the speaker concurs to the manifested by the interlocutor”.

this type as a strategy to create a relaxed environment between interlocutors (Kienpointner 1997: 262).

In a study on the role played by insults in the construction of male identity, Klaus Zimmermann (2003: 49) defines insults as “intentionally threatening or identity deteriorating acts”⁴¹ that are, as a consequence, impolite, something that would go along with what we have mentioned in Section 4. These acts are confronted with other communicative acts that, although face threatening, do not cause offence or require apologies between the interlocutors (Zimmermann 2003: 49). These acts are described as *antipolite* and do not stand for impoliteness but for an activity in male teen language that goes against established social norms (Zimmermann 2003: 57). According to the author, teens use an *antinormative* language that opposes to the norms of the established adult world, using resources proscribed by a given dominant society such as strategies oriented to present themselves as “different”, with “an rebellious identity” and “contrary to established norms”. Among teens, the constitution of a *generational identity* (more precisely, a teen male identity) is managed through *anti-politeness* strategies (Zimmermann 2003: 58).

In the case of teen language, we think that the use of some habitually impolite expressions is more comprehensive and answers to a mechanism of affiliation to a group and possibly of identity cohesion. It is possible for other members of society to resort to these same impolite expressions, but perhaps less intensively. This is reflected on the uses observed in a generational group of adults: *Calla cabrito* ‘shut up little bastard’ (example 6), *¡joder! estas reuniones en lugares cerrados me jodeís el cáncer ¡coño!, estos que se jodian* [J.82.A.1] ‘fuck! these meetings in closed places you mess with my cancer fuck! they can fuck up’; and also in female speakers: *¡qué cabrón!* [PG.119.A.1] ‘what a bugger!', *¡ah maricón!* ‘ah, you sissy' (example 5)⁴². A common feature of such situations is the existence of a friendship between participants in interaction (roles of friends). We think, thus, that the already described behaviours that seem to be impolite (or *anti-polite*, if we follow Zimmermann's terminology) in some social groups of present Spanish cultural communities are rather a conversational strategy to show affiliation and closeness beyond generational and sex limits.

Let us see some situations extracted from the corpus of conversations:

(4) (PG.119.A.1) (461-463)

- J1: no/ no/ porque no puedo ir/ voy a ir a la fábrica ↑y voy a decir ↑oye dame otra semana
 M1: ¡coño!/ pues haberla comprao y vamos nosotros// MIRA ESTE/ TÚ NO PIENSAS EN LOS DEMÁS/ EGOÍSTA
 P1: yo ahora puedo coger una semana/ si es preciso/ y recuperarla luego

(4) (PG.119.A.1) (461-463)

- J1: no/ no/ because i can't go/ i'm going to the factory ↑and i'm going tell them ↑hey give me another week

⁴¹ Zimmermann equals *identity* and *face*: “the interactants pursue goals of identity/face” (2003: 47) or when defining *face-work* as “management of identity/face” (2003: 48). Also, he considers that politeness is part of the management of identity (2003: 48). We believe, rather, that identity is, strictly, more individual than face, which is always a reflection of the interaction with others.

⁴² Despite this, an issue of *degree* may be present: the continuous reference to sexual topics can be more frequent in groups of speakers of the same sex, so that the conversation in [H.38.A.1] can be associated to aspects of male identity.

- M1: shit!/ you should have bought it for us to go// LISTEN TO HIM// **YOU DON'T THINK IN OTHER PEOPLE/ SELFISH**
 P1: I can now get a week/ if it's necessary/ and make up for it later

This sequence is part of a relaxed interaction over dinner involving two married couples who are friends. They adopt the roles of friends between the couples and the roles of spouses within each couple. The situational roles are of hosts and guests. Joaquín talks about a trip that could have been given to him had he bought an electric blanket, something he didn't accept because he couldn't go on holidays. Marisa calls him *egoista* 'selfish', making it explicit with the expression *tú no piensas en los demás* 'you don't think in other people'. This does not produce in Joaquín a negative reaction, the moment is not tense, and the conversation continues in the same positive tenor.

Example (5) proceeds from a conversation between friends that go to the same club. They follow the situational role of friends. As regards the discursive role, Julio makes a joke and Alicia answers it back:

- (5) (AP.80.A.1) (177-181)
 A1: yo me he apuntao ahi/ y] al niño también lo he apuntao
 S1: ¿qué lees/ [el Muy Interesante?]
 A2: [en El Ocaso]
 J1: El Ocaso/ con el nombre que tiene ya↓ °(Ocaso)°
 A3: (RISAS)// **¡ah↓ ma- maricón!**
 L1: ¡ay!/ oye↓ ¿y'has abierto aquí o no? (4")

- (5) (AP.80.A.1) (177-181)
 A1: i have registered myself/ and] i have registered the kid also
 S1: what do you read?/ [the Focus?]⁴³
 A2: [in The Sunset]
 J1: The Sunset/ with that name↓ °(Sunset)°
 A3: (LAUGHTER)// **you↓ si- sissy!**
 L1: hey!/ listen↓ and have you opened here or not? (4")

Alicia mentions the insurance company *El Ocaso* ('The Sunset'), where she has bought a burial insurance. Julio in J1 makes a joke from the meaning of the word "sunset"⁴⁴: Alicia in A1 ratifies the joke with laughter and with the expression *¡ah maricón!* 'ah, sissy!' that does not cause tension between them: They pass on other topics and continue talking in a relaxed tone. As a consequence, the expression does not produce an impoliteness effect.

The interaction in (6) presents interlocutors adopting the social roles of friends. The discursive roles configured are that who criticises and that who answers back.

- (6) (J.82.A.1) (479-489)
 S1: me estoy haciendo una bodega en Cirat⁴⁵// macho// me estoy haciendo una bodegaa
 V1: **¡calla cabrito!** que te vas y no me dices ni pío/ tú
 S2: pero si fue pensao y hecho/ mira era- era un sábado a las ocho de la noche/ y dig(o) *¡hostia!*/ yo tengo que (()) me muero

⁴³ A popular science magazine.

⁴⁴ "Decadence, declination, end", according to the RAE dictionary.

⁴⁵ A town in Valencia, from the shire Alto Mijareses.

(6) (J.82.A.1) (479-489)

- S1: i'm setting up a cellar in Cirat// man// i'm setting up a ceellar
 V1: **shut up little bastard!** you leave and don't say a word/ you
 S2: but it was thought and done/ look it was- was a saturday at eight in the evening/
 and i tell (to myself) *shit!*/ *i have to (()) i'm so dead*

Vicente wanted to visit a wine cellar that Sergio, his friend, is building. Vicente criticises Sergio in V1 because he didn't tell him in advance to go together: *¡Calla cabrito! que te vas y no me dices ni pío* 'shut up little bastard! you leave and don't say a word'. Sergio explains about his sudden decision to go, but he does not refer to Vicente's expressions. These expressions do not cause impoliteness effects and do not require apologies. What is more, the expression *calla cabrito* 'shut up little bastard instead of *cabrón*⁴⁶' highlights the use of the euphemistic adjective *cabrito* 'little bastard instead of *cabrón*⁴⁶' 'bastard' or the superlative *cabronazo* 'fat bastard'. This expression can act in itself as a mitigation to the criticism having Sergio not keeping his promise and annoying Vicente. We think that this is an instance of the *confianza* 'trust' between these Spanish speakers and a characteristic of their affiliative face. Also, the expression is accepted possibly because S2 considers the criticism as justified.

In (7) we present a situation where some young friends are joking. What happens here is in line with the observations made by Stenström and Jørgensen (in this volume). These authors find insults in conversations⁴⁷ between adolescents in Madrid ludic in phatic communication because "none of the abusives nor other taboo words seem to be used for the sake of insulting nor to have an insulting effect". This same remark can be appreciated in:

(7) (H.38.A.1) (393-412)

- A1: están infectando la- el ozono ↑¡coño!/ y luego dicen que no nos echemos espráis
 D1: **porque tú te tiras cada ((cuesco)) →/ que eso sí→**
 B1: eso sí que destruye la capa de ozono⁴⁸ (())
 B2 y C: [(RISAS)=]
 B3: = eso sí que es ((cloro)) puro carbono↓ nano⁴⁹ §
 D2: § (RISAS) eso sí es ozono
 (RISAS)
 A2: eso es bueno/ porque es- es sustancia orgánica
 B4: (RISAS)

(7) (H.38.A.1) (393-412)

- A1: they're infecting a- the ozone ↑fuck!/ and then they tell us not to use sprays
 D1: because you let off such a ((fart)) →/ **that it really→**
 B1: that really destroys the ozone layer (())
 B2 and C: [(LAUGHTER)=]
 B3: =that is really ((chlorine)) pure carbon↓ nano§
 D2: § (LAUGHTER) that is really
 ozone (LAUGHTER)
 A2: that is good because/ because it is- is organic substance

⁴⁶ In the first entry of the R.A.E. dictionary: "A saying from a person, an animal or a thing: That makes practical jokes, plays dirty tricks or is annoying".

⁴⁷ Corpus of Adolescent Language from Madrid (COLAm) from the University of Bergen (Norway), available at www.colam.tk.

⁴⁸ Between laughter.

⁴⁹ *Nano* is a form of treatment between teenagers from Valencia, Spain.

B4: (LAUGHTER)

Alfredo protests because a helicopter is flying over the zone where they are talking. Dani answers in D1 saying that Alfredo is also “contaminating the environment with his gasses”. In a social situation where the interlocutors had a lesser degree of closeness and trust, this would be practically impossible and would constitute a face attack to the interlocutor involved. However, that harmful effect is not found here; on the contrary, it is a discursive topic accepted by all participants. In his first intervention, Blas completes Dani’s suspended construction as *eso sí que destruye la capa de ozono* ‘that really destroys de ozono layer’, followed by laughter shared with Carlos. Even if Alfredo continues reelaborating the topic in A2, without showing offense, with *eso es bueno porque es sustancia orgánica* ‘that is good because it’s organic substance’ (after the sequence repeated by others and reelaborated by himself as *es sustancia gaseosa* ‘it’s gaseous substance’, always followed by laughter). This shows that Alfredo hasn’t interpreted Dani’s comment as impolite. The evaluation made by participants, deduced from their reactions, indicates that the effect of this strategy usually associated with an impolite use is not such in this case. The abundant laughter in this interaction clearly shows that it is a relaxed situation between speakers and that their affiliative face is reinforced.

5. Conclusions

The objective of this paper has been to analyse a series of lexical expressions with a conventionally negative load that can be used and interpreted in two different senses. On one hand, we have observed some expressions (such as *alcahueta* ‘snitch’, *egoísta* ‘selfish’, *maricón* ‘sissy’) that, in terms with their unmarked sense, suppose negative contents potentially harmful to other people’s face. It is the case of insults, derisions, accusations, etc. that can be confirmed as impolite in their most habitual uses. On the other hand, we have verified the existence of a marked use of expressions that do not fall within the territory of impoliteness, although it could apparently be such a case. These expressions are interpreted as an affiliative signal between interlocutors. We have mentioned the importance of taking into account the interpersonal consequences of a possible *impoliteness effect*. In Appendix 2, we organise in a table all the expressions and the effects we have referred to in our examples.

To sum up, we can revise the situations presented according to pragmatic, sociological and interpersonal planes. We focus on the following features in the three situations where *authentic impoliteness* was said to be present:

a) On the pragmatic plane, in two of the situations analysed we observe the interlocutors using the paralinguistic strategy of raising their tones of voice. This prosodic strategy is also used in the third situation, but differently: There is a prosodic dissociation by lowering the tone of voice. We can also observe repetitions and reformulations in their utterances.

b) On the sociological plane of roles, two of the situations involve family members (more specifically, spouses and a couple of boyfriend/girlfriend), while the third one involve acquaintances (they are contestants of a TV show and interact daily; they are not exactly friends but rather opponents in a competition).

c) On the plane of interpersonal effects, the addressee of the impolite activity sanctions the activity by reelaborating it discursively (rejecting, protesting, etc.).

As regards the four situations where *non-authentic impoliteness* is represented (or at least it is *non-authentic* to the people immersed in those interactions), we observe:

a) On the pragmatic plane, the use of expressions uttered in exclamations and accompanied by laughter.

b) On the sociological plane, all four situations have participants who are friends.

c) On the plane of interpersonal effects, there is no negative incidence in the conversation, the interaction continues in a relaxed way.

Having in mind the already analysed situations as examples of other interactions in the Val.Es.Co corpus (describing someone as *tacaño* ‘mean’, treating someone as *cabrón* ‘bugger’), we consider that the use of apparently impolite expressions do not cause a damage in the addressee’s face nor it has negative consequences in the interpersonal relation. On the contrary, these expressions are face damaging and/or interpersonally negative if they are interpreted as impolite. The apparently impolite expressions can be used because the interlocutors are friends, a relation that is reinforced by the use of expressions that show that ‘everything is fine between us’. Even if that situation can happen more often than not in groups of young male people, it can also be extended to other generational and sex groups through a process of conventionalisation. This supposes that in all these groups there appears a strategy of affiliation that serves the purpose of expressing familiarity and *confianza* ‘trust’ among speakers adopting the roles of friends.

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APPENDIX 1

Transcription conventions (based on Briz & Grupo VaL.Es.Co 2002)

A1:	Intervention of a speaker identified as A and first turn.
§	Immediate succession, without a distinguishable pause, between two different speakers.
=	Withholding of a participant’s turn in an overlapping.
[Place where an overlap or superposition starts.
]	End of simultaneous talk.
-	Restarts and self-interruptions without a pause.
/	Short pause, less than half a second.
//	Pause of half a second and a second.
///	Pause of more than a second.
(5")	Silence (lapse or interval) of 5 seconds; the number of seconds is indicated when the pauses are longer than a second and when it is especially significant.
↑	Rising tone.
↓	Falling tone.
→	Maintained or suspended tone.
CLARO	Marked or emphatic pronunciation (two or more capital letters), high tone of voice.
(())	Undecipherable fragment.
((siempre))	Dubious transcription.
dig(o)	Reconstruction of a lexical unit that has been pronounced incomplete, when it can hamper comprehension.
y'has	Phenomena of syntactic phonetics between words, especially marked ones.
°()°	Fragment pronounced with a low intensity or near to whispering.
(RISAS...)	Comments that appear on the margins of utterances.
aa	Lengthenings.

- i?* Questions. Also for appendixes such as *¿no?* ‘[tag questions]’ *¡eh?* ‘ah?’, *¿sabes?* ‘you know?’.
- i!* Exclamations.
- Italics:* Reproductions and imitations of emissions. Direct style.
- Bold:** Fragment highlighted for analysis.

APPENDIX 2

Expressions Analysed

Expression Conversation	Co-text	Paralinguist. Features	Interlocutor's Reaction	Roles	Sex Age	Effect
<i>Alcahueta</i> 'Snitch' [VC.117.A.1]	-	Prosodic dissociation	Confronts defensively, exhortation; <i>¡cállate ya!</i> ‘shut up, now!’. Pejorative comment: <i>No</i> <i>hace más que</i> <i>hablar sardinas</i> . 'She just talks bullshit'.	Spouses	M → F 26-55	Authentic Impoliteness (rejects)
<i>Entonces eres un egoísta</i> 'Then you are so selfish' [ML.84.A.1]	Reformulations Repetitions Disphemistic repetitions	Rising tone of voice	Apologises: “Okay, I’m sorry”.	Boyfriend and girlfriend	F → M 18-25	Authentic Impoliteness (apologises)
<i>Que me toca los cojones, coño</i> 'This fucks me off [It cracks my bullocks, fuck]' [Gran Hermano]	Disphemistic repetitions Repetitions	Rising tone of voice Shouts	Ironic tone. Repetitions. Pseudo-affective pronoun: <i>te me</i> <i>calmas te me</i> <i>calmas</i> ‘you calm down, you calm down’. Irony: <i>la tilita que</i> <i>te bebiste ayer</i> 'the little linden tea you drunk yesterday'.	Acquaintances	F → F 18-25	Authentic Impoliteness (rejects)
<i>Egoísta</i> 'Selfish' [PG.119.A.1]	Reformulation: 'You don't think in other people'	Laughter Rising tone of voice	Continues the conversation.	Friends	F → M 26-55	Non-authentic Impoliteness Affiliative effect
<i>¡Ah ma- maricón!</i> 'Ah, si-sissy!' [AP.80.A.1]		Exclamation Laughter	Continues the conversation.	Friends	F → M 26-55	Non-authentic Impoliteness Affiliative effect

<i>¡Calla cabrito!</i> <i>'Shut up little bastard!'</i> [J.82.A.1]	Exclamation	Explains. Continues the conversation.	Friends	M → M 26-55	Non-authentic Impoliteness Affiliative effect	
<i>Tú te tiras cada cuesco...</i> <i>'You let off such a fart...'</i> [H.38.A.1]	Suspended construction	Laughter completed by other participant	Re-elaboration. The topic continues.	Friends	M → M 18-25	Non-authentic Impoliteness Affiliative effect