

BEING IMPOLITE WHILE PRETENDING TO BE POLITE.
THE RUPTURE OF POLITENESS CONVENTIONS IN ELECTORAL DEBATES

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Abstract

This paper is a part of a larger research that pursues a global understanding of impoliteness in face-to-face electoral debates. That research distinguishes three essential axes, three complementary analytical perspectives: functional strategies of impoliteness, linguistic-discursive mechanisms to implement them and social impacts of impolite acts. In this frame, the present work develops an in-depth analysis of a special category of mechanisms, namely the rupture of politeness conventions, a subgroup within postliteral implicit mechanisms. This subgroup acquires its identity by the fact of carrying out a linguistic action that is conventionally associated with a polite attitude, but doing it in a rhetorically insincere way: the consequence is that apparent politeness becomes impoliteness. Relevant aspects in the characterization of ruptures are isolated

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and, on this basis, it is developed a detailed analysis of three specific kinds of mechanisms in which ruptures take shape: using ironic statements, developing different forms of overpoliteness and adopting a falsely collaborative attitude toward the interlocutor. The analysis of that group of mechanisms takes into account, simultaneously, the other two axes of the main research, strategies and social impacts.

Keywords: Impoliteness, politeness conventions, electoral debates

Contents

1. Introduction, objectives and corpus 137
 2. Three axes of analysis 139
 3. The rupture of a politeness convention 141
 - 3.1. Irony 146
 - 3.2. Overpoliteness 152
 - 3.3. Falsely collaborative attitude 155
 4. Conclusions 160
 5. Transcriptions conventions 162
- References 163

1. Introduction, objectives and corpus

Nearly two decades have gone by since the publication of the pioneering work of Culpeper (1996), which highlighted the need to provide its own space to research on linguistic impoliteness. During this time, the study of impolite behaviour has achieved great development, devoting special attention, not surprisingly, to the analysis of discourse genres of controversial nature. Among such genres, electoral debates are situated in a relevant place; and, certainly, numerous works have been devoted to study them, such as, to mention some relevant examples, Agha (1997), Harris (2001), Luginbühl (2007) or Fracciolla (2011). These works, of great interest, have, however, made quite partial contributions, while relevant publications with a

more general approach to impoliteness (as in the books of Bousfield, 2008; or Culpeper, 2011) have not paid specific attention to this matter. The same is true with regard to the Spanish area in particular, with which the present work is related to, where one can find contributions such as Blas (2001), Ridaó (2009), Bañón and Requena (2010) or Fernández García (2014).

In order to take one more step through the knowledge of the means that articulate impoliteness in electoral debates, we have been developing a research project that aims to make a global characterization of the operation of impoliteness in face-to-face debates.¹ In that research frame, this paper pursues the following objectives:

- (a) To briefly present the three axes of analysis that articulate the above-mentioned research project, raising the theoretical-methodological keys that give full meaning to this contribution.
- (b) To characterise in detail, into one of such lines, a set of trigger mechanisms of impolite attack, which we group together under the name of the rupture of a politeness convention.
- (c) To analyse in depth the specific features and the different nature of each of the three subtypes of ruptures found in the study of the corpus on which the research has been carried out.

This corpus consists of the top level face-to-face debate held in Spain in November 2011, which faced A. Pérez Rubalcaba and M. Rajoy before general elections, which lasted over 110 minutes. Both candidates were leading, at the time, their respective political parties, progressive in the first case and conservative in the second, in a clearly bipartisan political scene. Rubalcaba was the General Secretary of the Socialist Party (PSOE) and candidate for the presidency of the government; Rajoy, for his part, the president of the Popular Party (PP) and also candidate for the

¹ Some partial results have been presented in Fernández García (2015a, 2015b and 2016).

presidency.² The elections had been called early by the current president, J. L. Rodríguez Zapatero (PSOE), in a context of severe economic crisis.

The debate was organised by the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Television and was moderated by the prestigious journalist Manuel Campo Vidal. Its turns structure was significantly flexible, so that each turn lacked a fixed length, but both speakers shared the time allocated to each thematic section equally. There were three sections, preceded by an opening statement and a closing one on the part of each candidate: a first section of forty minutes, dedicated to economy and employment, a second section of thirty minutes, dedicated to social policies, and a third section of twenty minutes, raised as miscellaneous section, with open issues.

The transcription of the examples throughout this text follows the conventions set forth in paragraph 5, at the end of work.

2. Three axes of analysis

The research project into which the present contribution integrates has as a central objective, as we said, to get an overall view of the operation of impoliteness in face-to-face electoral debates. To achieve this goal, we articulate our analysis around three axes:

- (a) functional strategies of impoliteness used by speakers in order to attack the adversary,
- (b) linguistic-discursive mechanisms used to implement these strategies and
- (c) social impact of the attacks from the point of view of linguistic impoliteness.

² Both had also occupied senior positions in previous governments of their respective parties: Rajoy had been a minister and vice president of PP governments headed by J. M. Aznar (president between 1996 and 2004); Rubalcaba, for his part, had been a minister in PSOE governments headed by F. González (president between 1982 and 1996) as well as a minister and vice president under the presidency of J. L. Rodríguez Zapatero (president between 2004 and 2011).

As much as we would like to, we cannot go into great detail here to explain each of these three lines of work, so we will strictly limit ourselves to present those aspects that are most relevant to the analysis developed in section 3.³

Our proposal is based on the finding of a fairly general trend in research on impoliteness from the very pioneering work of Culpeper (1996), namely the mixing, without a definite criterion, of functional strategies for impolite attack and linguistic-discursive mechanisms employed to carry them out; against this trend, we propose to clearly distinguish the first ones from the second ones. Thus, taking into account contributions such as Culpeper (1996), Bousfield (2008) and Blas (2011), we have isolated the presence in our corpus of sixteen functional strategies, which we have grouped into four macrostrategies:

1. To attach negative facts (projects, values, behaviours, etc.) to the adversary.
 - 1.1. To criticise (or show the failure of) his ideas, actions, etc.
 - 1.2. To tell him that he is mistaken, to disagree, to contradict, etc.
 - 1.3. To accuse him of ignorance, incompetence or inaction.
 - 1.4. To criticise his discursive behaviour.
2. To attack the credibility of the adversary.
 - 2.1. To claim that he lacks credibility.
 - 2.2. To accuse him of lying (being untruthful, etc.).
 - 2.3. To accuse him of hiding the truth or concealing evil intentions.
 - 2.4. To brand him as contradictory or incoherent, to highlight his contradictions or incoherencies.
3. To take distance from the adversary and to show his inferiority.
 - 3.1. To make the differences that separate them manifest.
 - 3.2. To clearly show his isolation.
 - 3.3. To scorn him, to show indifference towards him.
 - 3.4. To mock him, to ridicule him.

³ Additional information may be found, especially with regard to strategies, in Fernández García (2015a and 2015b). About mechanisms, see Fernández García (2016).

4. To invade the space of the adversary, to pose obstacles for him.
 - 4.1. To reveal facts that make him feel uncomfortable.
 - 4.2. To show the deficiencies of his arguments clearly.
 - 4.3. To urge (or to put pressure on) him to do (or not do) something.
 - 4.4. To hinder him from expressing himself fluently.

Unlike strategies, mechanisms, secondly, are conceived as the linguistic-discursive means used to implement impolite attacks. Firstly, we distinguish explicit mechanisms from implicit mechanisms. Within the first set of mechanisms, we differentiate the local (e.g. lexical procedures), discursive (e.g. spoof) and interactional mechanisms (e.g. interruption). Within the second set of mechanisms, preliteral (essentially, presupposition) and postliteral, to which we will refer in more detail in the following section.

Thirdly, with respect to the social impact of impolite acts, connecting with the theoretical tradition that stems from Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), we adopt the theoretical model developed by Spencer-Oatey along various publications (including 2002 and 2008). According to her theory of *rappport management*, we distinguish in our analysis between attacks against *face* (*quality face*, *social identity face* and *relational face*) and attacks against *sociality rights* (*equity rights* and *association rights*).

We conclude here this brief introduction about the framework in which this paper is inserted, with which the first of three goals drawn up at the beginning has been achieved. Let us go now to the second one, the detailed characterisation of the group of mechanisms activated by the rupture of a politeness convention.

3. The rupture of a politeness convention

Within the mechanisms, we distinguish between different types and subtypes, among which –as we have seen– postliteral implicit mechanisms can be found. And, within them, we differentiate, at the same time, two subtypes: those activated by the context and those activated by the rupture of a politeness convention. In the first type, it can be argued that the implicit meaning arises from the clash between what is said and contextual conditions of enunciation, often as an implicature (Grice, 1975) or an indirect speech act (Searle, 1975). According to the data obtained from the analysed corpus,

rhetorical questions are the most successful mechanism within this group, also with a significant role of ironies, metaphors and different types of implicatures.

In the other type of implicit mechanisms, activated by the rupture of a politeness convention, the emergence of implicit meaning is not substantially different in nature (we will go into the nuances below). Its main specific feature is that the process is activated when the speaker uses politeness conventions in communicative circumstances that make manifest not only their insincerity but also the rhetorical nature of this insincerity,⁴ so that its polite potential is cancelled (Terkourafi, 2005: 251), giving way to the exact opposite effect, impolite attack. Can we imagine, in the agonal context of a face-to-face debate, a candidate praising his opponent? According to the history of face-to-face debates held in Spain, of course not. Take, for example, how J. M. Aznar praised F. Gonzalez during the first of two debates at the highest level that faced them in the campaign of 1993:⁵

- (1) AZNAR: Ha hecho usted un ejercicio que suele hacer habitualmente. Conste que usted tengo que reconocerle que en el arte de fingir es difícil igualarle. Lo hace usted muy bien.
- (1) *AZNAR: You have done an exercise that you tend to do quite often. For the record, I have to recognise that it is difficult to equal you in the art of pretending. You do it very well.*

It is apparent that the speech act of praise, conventionally associated to polite behaviour,⁶ not only loses, because of its own internal configuration (what is praised is

⁴ We are talking about "insincerity", then, in the sense that Haverkate (1984) does, rather than, therefore, in the most common everyday sense, that is, in relation to what the speaker really thinks or does not think when executing the speech act. Indeed, we have argued elsewhere (Fernández García, 2014), contrary to Blas (2011) approach, that sincerity in acts of politeness, understood in the last sense, does not really have a significant importance in communication development.

⁵ That one was the first face-to-face top level debate held in Spain. The progressive candidate, González (PSOE), had occupied the presidency of the government for more than a decade; the conservative candidate, Aznar (PP), aspired to the presidency for a second time.

⁶ Keeping in mind, of course, that, in this pragmatic aspect –as well as in many other–, cultural differences are huge. See, for example, in respect of praise, the anecdote narrated by Escandell (1996: 136-137).

"the art of pretending"), its polite potential, but manifestly becomes an impolite attack, as an incisive –while mocking– criticism.

It should be noted that, elsewhere (Fernández García, 2014), we criticised the views of Blas (2011) when he argues that politeness markers which appear in electoral debates do not fulfil, in general, a mitigating role but –on the contrary– an enhancing one of the attack against the interlocutor's face. In that respect, we argued that it is an unacceptable generalisation, since that enhancing function can only be activated according to specific discursive and/or contextual circumstances. Well, these circumstances are, it seems clear, those in question in the kind of mechanisms we now analyse. However, there are contexts in electoral debates in which no evidence justifies the interpretation of polite markers as impolite enhancers. This fact can be observed, for example, in passage (2), corresponding to our debate of 2011. We see in it how, following the complaint of Rajoy because of the succession of interruptions he was undergoing at the time, Rubalcaba agrees explicitly that he is right and makes a speech act of apology:

- (2) RAJOY: Luego me habla de la pública y de la p/ Pero, ¡hombre!,
 RUBALCABA: [T/ ten/] <señor Rajoy>⁷, reconozca/
 RAJOY: déjeme hablar, que [. . .] habla usted. Muchas [...]
 CAMPO: [A ver, tiene/ tiene] está en el uso de la palabra el [...]
 RUBALCABA: Perdone. Tiene usted razón.
- (2) *RAJOY: Then you talk to me about the public one and the p/ But man!,*
RUBALCABA: <Mister Rajoy>⁸, admit/
RAJOY: let me speak, that [. . .] you speak. Thank you so [...]
CAMPO: [Let's see, Mister Rajoy has] is in his turn [...]
RUBALCABA: Excuse me! You are right.

Making an apology is, in most contexts and also here, an example of polite attitude, an attitude that, with repairing intention, seeks to reinforce the addressee's face, even at the

⁷ Raising his voice.

⁸ Raising his voice.

expense of damaging the speaker's. And, although it is true that a speech act as such may in certain contextual conditions invert his value and become an enhancer of impoliteness,⁹ there does not seem to be in this case any discursive element that makes us think we are not facing a case of genuine politeness.

However, even though examples of this type can take place, we must not lose sight of the fact that the occurrence of genuine politeness in face-to-face debates, according to the data of Spanish debates from 1993, is certainly rare. And they were rare, in fact, the examples that could be found in the Rajoy-Rubalcaba 2011 debate. On the contrary, cases of impolite attacks triggered by the rupture of a politeness convention were highly frequent. Virtually any discursive component conventionally linked to polite behaviour can become, under the right circumstances, an enhancer of impoliteness:

- (3) RUBALCABA: Que es verdad que vivimos en este momento las tasas más bajas de criminalidad de la década. Las más altas fueron en el 2002; era usted ministro del Interior, pero seguramente, *[responding to some gesture of Rajoy]* sí, seguramente no tiene nada que ver.
- (3) RUBALCABA: *It is true that at the moment we have the lowest crime rates of the decade. The highest were in 2002; you were the Minister of Interior, but surely, [responding to some gesture of Rajoy] yes, surely it has nothing to do with it.*

Rubalcaba was talking during the third turn of the last thematic section of the debate when he deployed the strategy 3.1 ("to make the differences that separate them manifest"), with a comparison ("you were the Minister of Interior and so was I" Rubalcaba had reminded) which put the popular candidate in a bad position, since it holds a frontal attack against his quality face. The interesting point of this example, now, is that, being in a not particularly aggressive phase of the debate, Rubalcaba uses a mitigator element with the supposed function of smoothing the attack. Nonetheless, it is

⁹ It is so explained by Díaz (2011), who associates these uses, with regard to the context of enunciation, to controversial situations; and, with respect to discursive structures, to anterior oriented argumentative structures (Anscombe and Ducrot, 1994), often adversatives.

clear that this element has an ironic nature¹⁰ and carries out, therefore, the rupture of a politeness convention: it is only superficially polite and entails, through a reversal of polarity at the propositional level, a clear intention of enhancing –not softening– the attack.

This group of mechanisms for implementing impolite attacks was already considered by Culpeper (1996: 356) in his pioneering work, where it was characterised as one of the major categories of impolite acts. Also Bousfield (2008: 95) makes reference to it and classifies it as a specific type within implicit impoliteness. Culpeper (2011: 165 and following), meanwhile, explains that its operation is based on a mismatch between, on the one hand, the context projected by (or associated with) the politeness convention used and, on the other, another aspect of communicative behaviour or situation. This mismatch can be internal or external to the communicative behaviour itself:

- (a) The internal mismatch occurs within the communicative behaviour itself, as when a polite verbal content collides with an intonation, a gesture, a look, etc. that go in the opposite direction, or when a polite formula or content is combined with an impolite formula or content.
- (b) The external mismatch occurs when the polite behaviour collides with the situational conditions of the communicative exchange, as when an excess of politeness is used (a kind of use so-called "overpoliteness" by Brenes, 2011: 47) or when a speaker thanks an action of the hearer that is negative or detrimental to himself.

Thus, the example of Aznar in (1) shows a case of internal mismatch, since the formula used for praise includes within itself the discordant element, the impolite content. On the contrary, passage (3) exemplifies the case of external mismatch, since there is no impolite trigger in the words themselves (the mitigator used at the end) or the behaviour of Rubalcaba, being the root of the mismatch in the background information concerning

¹⁰ It makes no much sense to argue that the Minister of Interior has no responsibilities for crime rates in a country. Moreover, according to the logic of electoral debates, if Rubalcaba has highlighted the issue it has been –it seems evident– with the intention of damaging Rajoy's face.

the topic of which they are discussing and in the characteristics of the discursive genre of debate itself.

Discursive location of the mismatch (internal/external) is, therefore, a first criterion for characterisation and classification of these mechanisms. Secondly, as to the nature of the impolite act performed, ruptures show mainly (though not exclusively, as we shall see) linked to attacks on association rights. This fact is directly linked to the prominence that ruptures have in the implementation of the second subgroup of strategies that make up macrostrategy 3 of our list ("to take distance from the adversary and to show his inferiority"), namely strategy 3.3 ("to scorn him, to show indifference towards him") and 3.4 ("to mock him, to ridicule him").¹¹ And, thirdly, a key element is the specific discursive configuration in which ruptures take shape in debates. The rest of the paper is devoted to a detailed analysis of this last aspect (but without losing sight of the other), thereby addressing the third goal drawn up at the beginning.

3.1. Irony

When we turn our attention to the specific mechanisms through which ruptures appear in our debate, data clearly shows the main role of irony. Indeed, ironic performance of certain speech acts, by means of both internal and external mismatches, is outlined in our corpus as the most widely used mechanism for the implementation of ruptures. Here we will not go into depth on theoretical characterisation of this complex phenomenon, to which we devoted monographic attention elsewhere years ago (Fernández García, 2001).¹² We are reminded that, from a gricean perspective (Grice, 1975), ironic statements can be understood as transparent insincerities by the speaker, with the dual possibility of having their root at the propositional level or at the level of illocutionary

¹¹ In Fernández García (2015b: 39) we explain that the third macrostrategy shows “dos componentes esenciales: a) el de la distancia y el asilamiento, en el que inciden las dos primeras estrategias [...], y b) el de la inferioridad (que provoca el menosprecio, la indiferencia o la burla), con el que se relacionan las otras dos” (“two essential components: a) distance and isolation, to which the first two strategies affect [...], and b) inferiority (causing scorn, indifference or mock), to which the other two are related”).

¹² An interesting theoretical review in the Spanish context can be found, for example, in Ruiz Gurillo (2010).

force (Haverkate, 1984, 1985): the first case takes place when the speaker breaks the sincerity condition of assertive acts, with a consequent effect of opposite meaning (whether negation or affirmation of the contrary); the second case occurs when the condition is broken into another speech act (a piece of advice, for example), with the possible consequences of the denial of its illocutionary force or the emergence of a different one.¹³

Before going into the analysis of the operation of irony as a mechanism for impolite attack by the rupture of a politeness convention, we will consider one aspect of interest about the nature of this implicit phenomenon. Nuolijärvi and Tiittula (2011: 573), in their study about the operation of irony in electoral debates of 2006 Finnish presidential election, point out that it is an optimal tool for the attack on the opponent. However, they later argue (2011: 584), in the classic line of Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and Leech (1983), that irony acts as a mitigator of the attack, as a subtle mechanism that allows speakers to be critical while pretending to be friendly. Against this view, when thoroughly analysing the relationship between irony and (im)politeness, we stated (Fernández García, 2001: 110-111) that it seems difficult to accept that irony acts, in general, as a mitigator of attacks. On the contrary, it will work as an enhancer, to the extent that, as Haverkate (1985: 353) points out, it does nothing but reinforce the intensity of evaluation. We reaffirm here those ideas, insisting that it is possible that the ironic utterance, because of its implicit nature, softens the negative consequences of the act for the speaker's own face (Jorgensen, 1996: 627). But it does not mean that, in general, it performs any kind of mitigation, because, in fact, what usually happens is exactly the opposite, namely that such acts acquire a special discrediting force that they would lack if they had been set directly. This is an important issue for the global sense

¹³ From a different perspective, Sperber and Wilson developed in different works (including 1978 and 1981) the vision of irony as *mention*. The speaker starts, as in the gricean conception, from the perception of a discrepancy between a state of affairs and how it is presented in the statement. The difference is placed in the different usage the speaker makes of such a representation, namely not of *use* but of *mention*: “el hablante puede hacerse eco de un enunciado para sugerir que lo encuentra inoportuno, fuera de lugar, o que lo desaprueba totalmente debido a su falta de pertinencia comunicativa” (“the speaker can echo a statement to suggest that he considers it inappropriate, out of place, or that he completely disapproves it because of its lack of communicative relevance”) (Fernández Sánchez, 1993: 95-96).

of this work, given that understanding irony, in general, as a mitigating procedure would make its inclusion meaningless in an analysis of mechanisms used for impolite attack.

Dealing now with the configuration and operation of ironic utterances in our corpus, it should be noted that those based on propositional level, although relevant, showed less importance than those based on illocutionary force. The first appeared mainly linked to the category of implicit mechanisms we have called *activated by the context* (but not only there, as we have seen in passage (3)), while the latter acquired a clear role in the implementation of ruptures of a politeness convention. In this group, we are, therefore, mainly talking about the carrying out of certain speech acts that usually appear linked to polite behaviour, but, in terms of their ironic performance, develop an illocutionary force different from the apparent and hold an impolite attack.

Firstly, we will take into account the speech act of thanking by observing two examples, different in terms of the location of their mismatches. Number (4) corresponds to Rubalcaba at the end of the first turn of the second thematic section and (5), to Rajoy in the third turn of the same section:

(4) RUBALCABA: Y:: y, realmente, me gustaría saber si usted tiene alguna propuesta para financiar la sanidad pública más allá de:: de esos de esos principios generales que ha anunciado usted en una clase de primero de economía que le agradecemos todos los españoles, estoy seguro.

(4) RUBALCABA: *And:: and, really, I wonder if you have any proposal to fund public health beyond:: these general principles you announced in a first year economy lesson that all Spaniards thank you for, I'm sure.*

(5) RUBALCABA: Pues no, se la voy a pasar, e/ eso y, por cierto::,

RAJOY: Páseme la cinta [. . .], aunque sea mañana. Se lo

RUBALCABA: el modelo austriaco para que vea usted [...]

RAJOY: agradeceré:: se lo agradeceré mucho.

(5) RUBALCABA: *Well no, I'm going to hand you it, that and, indeed::,*

RAJOY: *Hand me the tape [. . .], even if it is tomorrow. I'll be*

RUBALCABA: *the Austrian model in order for you to see [...]*

RAJOY: *grateful:: I'll be very grateful*

We find in (4) an attack against the association rights of Rajoy, an attack in the form of a mockery (strategy 3.4). It is driven by the fact that Rubalcaba implements a thanking act while he makes explicit (internal mismatch) the fact that the preparatory condition of that act is not met (it was a "first year" lesson and, therefore, there is not very much to be thanked). In (5), meanwhile, Rajoy responds to a falsely collaborative offer of Rubalcaba, consisting of sending to him the recording of a certain debate held some years ago.¹⁴ Rajoy's response consists of a request and a thanking (or, to be exact, the future projection of a thanking) that, depending on an external mismatch, has a clearly ironic nature. This is so to the extent that the popular candidate is neither asking the socialist to hand over the tape nor is he thanking him for doing so: facing Rubalcaba's falsely collaborative offer, what Rajoy does is just the opposite, to scorn (with an attack, one more time, against the association rights of his interlocutor) his opponent's offer (strategy 3.3), by implying that he is not interested in what Rubalcaba can send to him. The mismatch is external because they are the relationship with the previous discourse and the own rules of debates that make us understand that Rajoy is not asking nor thanking his rival for anything. The key, with regard to the idea of thanking, is the same as in (4): the context makes the insincerity of the speech act clear, given that it becomes apparent that the speaker hardly believes that the thanked action is beneficial to him, i.e., given that the preparatory condition for the act is violated (Searle, 1969: 75).¹⁵

Within this first group of ruptures, those based on irony, a second very interesting type, along with thanking, is praise. In connection with it, we observe, as previously, one example from each speaker, again with differences in the location of their mismatches:

- (6) RAJOY: Son ustedes, se lo he dicho antes, maestros en decir una cosa y hacer exactamente la contraria.
- (6) RAJOY: *You are, I've said it before, masters in saying one thing but doing the exact opposite.*

¹⁴ This issue will be discussed in detail in 3.3.

¹⁵ Rubalcaba is going to send the tape to Rajoy in order he can understand certain explanation that –the socialist says– he fails to understand. Rajoy, however, has made very clear his open disagreement with the position defended by Rubalcaba on the subject matter, making evident that he has not the slightest interest in receiving additional explanations.

(7) RUBALCABA: Porque hasta ahora lo único que ha hecho es hablar de nuestra reforma laboral y del año 92, pero de lo que va a hacer usted no me ha dicho nada. Eso sí, <ha dicho que va a hacer un cambio, que va a hacer un plan, un gobierno competente>¹⁶. Fantástico, señor Rajoy. E/ eso sí que es concretar. Hay que reconocer que me ha gustado mucho, su esquema económico me ha parecido de lo más eh:: llamativo.

(7) RUBALCABA: *Because until now all you've done is talk about our labour reform and about the year 92, but you've told me nothing about what you're going to do. I mean, <you've said you're going to make a change, you're going to make a plan, a competent government>*¹⁷. *Fantastic, Mr. Rajoy. That's certainly putting things into practice. Admittedly, I liked it a lot, your economic scheme has seemed to me the most eh:: striking.*

In (6), from the third turn of the first thematic section, Rajoy reproduces an expression that he had used minutes before¹⁸ and (by means of a rupture caused by an internal mismatch, similar to that of Aznar in (1)), performs an attack against Rubalcaba's social identity face, ironically highlighting the inconsistencies of the socialists (strategy 2.4). It can be noticed how the illocutionary act of praise, based on a preparatory condition about the existence of a certain positive quality of the hearer –in this case, being a master–, becomes ironically a harsh criticism, to the extent that such a mastery is in reference to something negative. In (7), from the last turn of the first thematic section, Rubalcaba, after parodying Rajoy, ironically praises him with a mocking intention (strategy 3.4). We are talking about a partially internal (Rubalcaba pronounces these words with a half-smile) and partially external (the alleged value of what has been praised is discredited in the previous context, specifically in the parody) mismatch, aimed at damaging, once again, the association rights of the interlocutor.¹⁹

¹⁶ Parodying.

¹⁷ Parodying.

¹⁸ In that case, using a reinforcer adjective of praise: “son ustedes unos auténticos maestros” (“you are real masters”).

¹⁹ It should be done a brief reflection about the nature of this last irony. In Fernández García (2015b: 51-52) we also referred to these words of Rubalcaba and talked about a based-on-the propositional-level

A third kind of ironic rupture (we have talked about thanking and giving praise) consists of the expression of a positive emotion towards the intentions or the projects of the adversary. In (8) we can see this through the words of Rajoy during the third turn of the central thematic section:

(8) RAJOY: Pero si es que han hecho recortes en todo en este presupuesto. Recortes en servicios sociales y promoción social, un 8,1; en educación han hecho recortes por otro 8,1; en prestaciones sociales, por el 5,7; en política de vivienda, por el 19,3; eliminaron la deducción por adquisición de vivienda habitual. Si es que se han/ han tenido que hacer recortes porque han sido poco competentes y poco diligentes a la hora de gestionar la economía de los españoles. Y todo lo demás está muy bien, y yo me alegro de sus buenas intenciones [...].

(8) RAJOY: *You've done cuts on everything in this budget. Cuts in social services and social promotion have been made by 8.1; another 8,1 cuts have been made in education; in social benefits, by 5.7; in housing policy, by 19.3; deductions were eliminated for primary residence purchase. You've/ you've had to make cuts because you've been little competent and little diligent in the management of the economy of Spaniards. And everything else is fine, and I'm glad of your good intentions [...].*

As we said, what is presented as an expression of positive emotion from the popular candidate to his adversary discursively works, by virtue of its ironic enunciation, as an expression of scorn (strategy 3.3) directed against his association rights. It seems that Rajoy is responding to a general idea that, somehow, was the driving force in Rubalcaba's discourse: the socialists were those who pursued the welfare of citizens, while the conservatives were moved by other spurious purposes. Against this, Rajoy lists a series of cuts made by the socialist government as a result of its –presented as– inability to good governance, adding later: “And everything else is fine, and I'm glad of

irony, given that, from the point of view of its assertive nature, these statements show a reversal of polarity in this level of enunciation (the proposal is worthless, he has not specified anything, etc.). However, this reversal of polarity promotes that it works actually as criticism what superficially seems a compliment, namely, that also illocutionary force of the act is altered.

your good intentions”. It is clear that, by reason of an external to the statement mismatch (in this case, of its relationship with the previous context), this expression of positive emotion becomes scorn: *I don't care about your good intentions, since you are incompetent for governance.*

3.2. Overpoliteness

Within this group of mechanisms for the implementation of impolite attacks that are based on the rupture of a politeness convention, irony takes shape as the primary resource, but not certainly the only one of interest. Thus those cases in which the cause of the rupture is an excess of politeness are also relevant. At such times, we are faced with mismatches that are, by definition, external, because overpoliteness is caused by the collision between a highly polite behaviour and contextual conditions that are not consistent with such behaviour. A clear example of these kind of mechanisms can be observed is the use of the formula “si lo tiene a bien” (“if it is convenient”), used by both speakers in our debate. Passage (9) shows Rajoy in the second turn of the first thematic section:

(9) RAJOY: Ahora nos viene eh:: diciendo eh:: y prometiendo pues una serie de cosas. Oiga, ¿y por qué no las hizo antes? ¿Es que se le han ocurrido hace media hora? Eso sí, nos dice que lo va a financiar con el impuesto de las grandes fortunas y con el impuesto a los bancos. Bueno, eso es lo que ustedes eh:: habitualmente nos dicen. Si hay un impuesto para grandes fortunas y un impuesto para los bancos, ¿por qué no lo han hecho antes? Porque yo no sé en qué consiste ese impuesto para los bancos. Yo lo único que me interesa de ese impuesto para los bancos, aparte de que me lo explique usted, si lo tiene a bien, es si eso sirve para que haya más crédito en España, porque a mí eso sí que me importa; si eso sirve para que el crédito sea más barato, porque a mí eso sí que me importa; si eso sirve para que las comisiones de los bancos sean menores, porque eso a mí sí que me importa; y si eso sirve para crear empleo. Eso es lo que me importa, señor Pérez Rubalcaba.

(9) RAJOY: Now you come eh:: saying all of this eh:: and promising well a number of things. Hey, and why didn't you do them before? Is it because you thought of

them half an hour ago? You say you are going to fund it with the tax on large fortunes and the tax on banks. Well, that's what you eh:: usually tell us. If there is tax on large fortunes and a tax for banks, why haven't you done it before? Because I do not know what that tax for banks consists of. Because my only interest about that tax for banks, apart from you to explain it to me, if it is convenient, is if this is only in order to gain more credit in Spain, because to me that is something important, if this is to make the credit in Spain cheaper, because to me that's what really matters, is if this is a way of reducing banks' commissions, because to me that's what's important, and if this is to create employment. That's my only interest, Mr. Pérez Rubalcaba.

A significant accumulation of attacks on Rubalcaba's association rights can be observed here, by means of the use of strategies 3.3 ("to scorn him, to show indifference towards him") and 3.4 ("to mock him, to ridicule him"), one of which is the use of "si lo tiene a bien" ("if that is convenient"). This phrase appears in the Spanish phraseological dictionary of Seco, Andrés y Ramos (2004), defined as "Dignarse o estimar oportuno" ("to deign or to consider appropriate") with the added pragmatic indication that it is "frecuente en estilo ceremonioso" ("common in ceremonious style") (s.v. *bien*²). Therefore, the external mismatch is clear, because, in the context of a cascade of impolite attacks like the one that is taking place, the occurrence of this expression is highly shocking: its excess of politeness results manifest, especially when Rajoy has made it clear that he considers this tax a worthless occurrence and he does not care about it at all.

Another noteworthy materialization of overpoliteness in the execution of ruptures is the use of the Spanish conditional verb form, one more resource for achieving the objective of being impolite by dint of being overpolite. An example can be found in passage (10):

(10) RUBALCABA: Segundo, señor Rajoy. Usted tampoco me ha aclarado lo de las pymes. N/ no me lo ha aclarado. Usted ha [m/] ha hecho remisiones <a nuestra reforma laboral>²⁰, pero, finalmente, lo que no nos ha dicho es lo que va a hacer

²⁰ With parodic tone.

usted. Yo le pediría que, además de hacer referencias a lo que hizo el Gobierno socialista en el año 92, fijese, en el año 92, m::e diga lo que va a hacer usted con la reforma laboral.

- (10) RUBALCABA: *Second, Mr. Rajoy. You haven't even clarified the question of SMEs. You haven/ haven't clarified it. You've [m/] have made referrals <to our labour reform>²¹, but what you finally didn't tell us is what you're going to do. I'd ask you, in addition to making references to what socialist government did in year 92, notice, in year 92, to tell m::e what you are going to do with the labour reform.*

Rubalcaba begins the last turn of the first thematic section reproaching his opponent for not having answered a certain question posed before (in the frame of an overall strategy consisting of showing that the popular candidates were "hiding" their true intentions for a future government). Thereupon, he throws a new criticism for the same reason (that can be seen at beginning of the passage), joined with a parodic mocking intonation. In this context, the socialist candidate uses the conditional verb form as a polite marker to soften the interactional imposition of his request. In the speech of Rubalcaba, the context makes it clear, however, that the object of the request is something that would not necessarily have been asked for, something that Rajoy himself should have already offered: every participant in a face-to-face electoral debate should know that, without being asked, they must present their proposals for the future and not just criticize what their adversary did twenty years ago. The context makes the use of the overpolite role of the polite verb form clear.

Our last example of this section (the beginning of the fourth turn of the first thematic section by Rubalcaba) shows, as (10), overpoliteness in a request, but in this case through a different mechanism:

- (11) RUBALCABA: *Pero ¿me quiere usted decir [pausa breve] si va [pausa breve] a cambiar [pausa breve] el sistema de prestaciones por desempleo? [¿Si]*

²¹ With parodic tone.

- RAJOY: No, ya se lo he dicho. Además, le he
- RUBALCABA: E n / e n / e n t o n c e s mn:: mn::
- RAJOY: dicho que miente. Le he dicho las dos cosas, que miente y que
- RUBALCABA: ya ¿M:: me/ me permite leerle/ me permite
- RAJOY: deja caer insidias. Miente y deja caer insidias.
- RUBALCABA: leerle su programa?
- (11) RUBALCABA: *But would you like to tell me [short pause] if you're going [short pause] to change [short pause] the system of unemployment benefits? [If]*
- RAJOY: *No, I've already told you. Furthermore, I've*
- RUBALCABA: *T h / t h / t h e n mn:: mn::*
- RAJOY: *told you that you are lying. I've told you both, you're lying and*
- RUBALCABA: *yes M:: may/ may I read/ may I*
- RAJOY: *dropping maliciousness. You're lying and dropping maliciousness.*
- RUBALCABA: *read your programme?*

We can see how the polite request is performed here by an interrogative form. The point is that Rubalcaba asks for permission to speak through a polite and refined formula in a context (again, external mismatch) where his words acquire a manifestly overpolite tone: his interlocutor is interrupting him to such an extent that he cannot speak, and is also launching heavy attacks against his relational face; and, in such a situation, Rubalcaba politely asks for permission to speak despite it being his turn to speak.

3.3. Falsely collaborative attitude

As a third and final step in our analysis of mechanisms for impolite attack by the rupture of a politeness convention, we will stop to analyse the role represented by certain statements that are characterized by showing a falsely collaborative attitude towards the interlocutor. That is, we refer to the use of linguistic means that seem to enhance common ground –and, with it, politeness– between speakers, but, depending on certain circumstances, do so only superficially and, in fact, cause a rupture. The main mechanism in this type of rupture is the execution of certain speech acts with a polite

profile (advice, recommendations, offers) that have a particular feature, namely they are grounded on a preparatory condition that has critical implications towards the addressee. This fact causes that, even though the speech act is implemented (i.e. no indirect speech act is set off), a rupture takes place: a conventionally linked to politeness act is implemented with the intention of causing an impolite effect.

We are, therefore, talking about utterances that seem to show an empathic intention but, at the end, just turn its polite attitude into impoliteness enhancing. Look at passage (12), from the fourth turn of the first thematic section:

- (12) RUBALCABA: Que no, que no tiene que ver con el desempleo. Esto
- RAJOY: Yo creo que [de/] deberían
- RUBALCABA: es otra cosa, señor Rajoy. Esto es otra cos/
- RAJOY: mejor explic/ eh:: explicarle mejor las cosas, porque
- RUBALCABA: Esto es o/ No. Esto es Esto es
- RAJOY: es que [claro] es que al final [...].
- RUBALCABA: otra cosa, señor Rajoy.

- (12) RUBALCABA: *No, that has nothing to do with unemployment. That's*
- RAJOY: *I think that [yo/] you should*
- RUBALCABA: *another thing, Mr. Rajoy. That's another th/*
- RAJOY: *better expla/ eh:: be explained things better, because*
- RUBALCABA: *That's a/ No. That is That's*
- RAJOY: *it's because [clearly] it's because at the end [...].*
- RUBALCABA: *another thing, Mr. Rajoy.*

It can be appreciated how Rajoy, interrupting Rubalcaba, gives him some mitigated advice, by means of which he seems to attempt nothing but to reveal his –supposed– ignorance (strategy 1.3), attacking his quality face. One might think, at first glance, that we are dealing with an ironic utterance, very similar to, for example, (4) or (6); and it seems beyond doubt that the purpose that moves Rajoy is not actually to remedy his rival, but to highlight his –supposed– ignorance. However, if we look at felicity

conditions of advice speech act (Searle, 1969: 67), we see that, in fact, they do not break in this case:

Propositional content: Future act *A* of *S*.

Preparatory: 1. *S* has some reason to believe *A* will benefit *H*.
2. It is not obvious to both *S* and *H* that *H* will do *A* in the normal course of events.

Sincerity: *S* believes *A* will benefit *H*.

Essential: Counts as an undertaking to the effect that *A* is in *H*'s *best interest*.

Let's be precise. This future act (*A*) is not, in our case, exactly a hearer's (*H*) act, but it is relating to the hearer and executed according to his decisions. The speaker (*S*) is convinced that the act will benefit the hearer, of course, to the extent that if he receives better explanations, his ignorance will be relieved. And, since it is not evident that such a thing will happen (that he receives better explanations), the speaker advises that such explanations should be carried out, sure that it will be in the hearer's best interest.

In this case, therefore, as we said, it can hardly be said that an indirect speech act takes place, as it happened, for instance, in the thanking of (4), where the failure of the preparatory condition acted as a trigger mechanism for irony. The crux of the matter also lies here in the first preparatory condition of the illocutionary act, but not in its break. This is so because, in this speech context, that condition tacitly implies an incisive criticism against the addressee: the reason why *A* will be in *H*'s best interest is nothing but his ignorance. Criticism, therefore, is configured as an implicit accompanying of the implementation of the speech act of advice and causes a rupture in the form of a falsely collaborative attitude. But it should be clear that, in this case, it is the keeping –and not the breaking– of the preparatory condition what causes the rising of the implicit meaning. As for the internal or external nature of the mismatch that causes the impolite effect, we must think it is, in this case, external, since the trigger for impoliteness is contextual: it is not the preparatory condition itself, but the supposed ignorance that, in the specific speech situation, implicitly gives meaning to such a condition; and, in addition, of course, the fact that the implied criticism is aimed at a

candidate for the presidency of the government, it is uttered by his opponent and takes place in a television broadcast that is being watched by millions of people.²²

On the other hand, regarding the fact that the real intention behind the performance of the act of advice is to make the criticism, it does not have to undermine its nature. Consider, for example, the frequent case of a speaker who, due to the insistence of an interlocutor, makes a certain promise in order to relieve their pressure: this promise counts as a future commitment of the speaker, regardless of whether that was his main objective in formulating it or not. And, from another point of view, it cannot be said that the advice of (12) is itself insincere and breaks, as a consequence, the sincerity condition of the act ("S believes A will benefit H"); but it is clear, going back to the characterization of ruptures proposed in section 3, that there is a rhetorical insincerity with regard to the superficially polite profile of the act. It is an important remark, also applicable to the other utterances of falsely collaborative attitude that will be analysed.

The critical component of the analysed example aims, we said, at the ignorance of the adversary (strategy 1.3), trying to damage his quality face. This is an interesting detail, given that the combination of this kind of implicit meaning with that specific functional purpose is a recurrent fact in our corpus. This also occurs in (13), from the third turn of the third thematic section, with a recommendation from Rubalcaba dedicated to his rival:

(13) RUBALCABA: [...] yo también voy a los pueblos de España,

no es usted el único que los pasea. Sí, ¡hombre!, sí. Claro que sí.

RAJOY: [Poco, poco.]

RUBALCABA: Soy diputado de Cádiz, hay muchísimos pueblos pequeñitos, magníficos. Por cierto, se los recomiendo.

(13) RUBALCABA: [...] *I also go to villages of Spain,*

²² Consider that a statement like "I think your teacher should explain this better to you", led by a father to his son in view of a difficulty arisen while trying to solve a math problem at home, does not have to involve any impolite effect at all (obviously, a specific context should be analysed), because it would be a genuinely collaborative attitude.

You're not the only one who passes through them. Yes, come on now, of course.

RAJOY: *[Little, little.]*

RUBALCABA: *I am deputy by Cádiz, there are many tiny villages, magnificent. By the way, I recommend them to you.*

It seems clear that a new rupture of a politeness convention is found here, since a formula associated to politeness is used (when recommending, one wants to share a good thing with another), but with an ultimate impolite aim (to highlight interlocutor's ignorance of what has been recommended). The question is, in much the same way as explained for the advice of (12), that we do not find either a reversal of polarity in the propositional content or any alteration in the illocutionary force that make the recommendation ironic: the one who recommends something generally does so because the interlocutor does not know of it (at least at first hand); the peculiarity of this case, as above, is fully contextual, linked to the communicative situation, and has to do with the fact that such a –supposed– ignorance is something reprehensible in a candidate, who is supposed to have a profound knowledge of the country he aspires to govern (a knowledge about which Rajoy comes boasting and which implicitly contradicts the recommendation –strategy 1.2–). We meet again, therefore, a new sample of falsely collaborative attitude, with the execution of an act linked to politeness, that, on the basis of an external mismatch, pursues the ultimate goal of causing an impolite effect. That effect is generated from an implicit criticism and arises, as it can be said, in parallel to the speech act of recommendation.

A similar situation can be found –as we move on to the last example– several times in our debate, almost always in the words of Rubalcaba, when he presents to his adversary certain samples of a falsely collaborative attitude in the form of offers. Offers are, as Escandell (2004: 192) explains on the basis of the ideas of Leech (1983), among the speech acts that support the social relation between the speakers. However, in contrast to the polite profile they tend to show, offers can also take sometimes rather different features. It is clear in (14), from the third turn of the second thematic section:

- (14) RUBALCABA: [...] qué cosas dice, [hombre]! Pero ¡qué cosas
 RAJOY: Es que yo estaba allí y yo estaba allí cuando
 RUBALCABA: dice! Pero le voy a pasar mañana la cinta de P/

- RAJOY: se tomó el acuerdo de pedir el crédito. Yo tuve que votarlo.
- RUBALCABA: del señor Pizarro y del señor Solbes, que se lo explicó, hombre.
- RAJOY: Pues pues pásemela [...]
- (14) RUBALCABA: [...] *the things you say, [man]!* *The things you*
- RAJOY: *It's that I was there and I was there when the*
- RUBALCABA: *say! But I'm going to hand you the tape of P/*
- RAJOY: *agreement of asking for the credit was reached. I had to vote it.*
- RUBALCABA: *of Mr. Pizarro and Mr. Solbes, who explained that to him, man.*
- RAJOY: *Well well hand it to me [...]*

It is clear how the offer is formulated in a context of confrontation that cancels any possibility of polite interpretation, showing that the socialist utters it with the ultimate aim of highlighting the –presented as– ignorance of his adversary. The case is parallel to the one above: Rubalcaba offers to give the tape to Rajoy (offer, politeness), although the motivation that encourages such an offer is to show his ignorance of that matter (rupture, impoliteness). That fact, anyway, does not distort or invalidate the act of offering itself. And it can be thought that the impolite mismatch has, in this case, both an internal and external nature: it is external because the difference between this offer and a genuinely polite one is given by contextual circumstances (what, who, where, etc.) and also, in a purely discursive level, to the extent that the confrontational atmosphere that permeates the debate in that moment makes less of a genuine act of politeness; and it is, moreover, internal, because the tone and intensity of voice of Rubalcaba, and even his facial expression at the moment, are hardly consistent with any polite expression.

4. Conclusions

We proposed three objectives at the beginning of this work. Regarding the former, we have briefly presented the main lines of the research project in which this contribution is integrated, highlighting how the global understanding of the analysed phenomenon can be markedly enriched by the matched action of the three complementary analytical perspectives: strategies, mechanisms and social impacts. The presentation of the

theoretical-methodological framework has also been the basis on which we have built the achievement of the second objective, the detailed characterization of the group of mechanisms that have been called *ruptures of a politeness convention*. As a distinct subgroup within postliteral implicit mechanisms, ruptures acquire their identity by the fact of carrying out a linguistic action that is conventionally associated with a polite attitude, but doing it in a rhetorically insincere way: the consequence is that apparent politeness becomes impoliteness. In the characterization of ruptures, we isolated two relevant aspects, namely: the type of mismatch that triggers them (internal/external), on the one hand, and the values they show in the three key variables that articulate the research (i.e., what strategies they implement, through what specific mechanisms they do and what social impacts they have), on the other hand.

We have developed our third and crucial objective just from the identification of the three main types of mechanisms by which ruptures are carried out: an in-depth analysis of the specific features and different nature of each of them. In this sense, the main role of ironic statements has been highlighted, especially those located at the illocutionary level. With internal or external mismatches, depending on the case, different types of speech acts (such as thanking and praise) are a tool to ridicule and scorn, usually when they are uttered under circumstances that violate any of their preparatory conditions. The second mechanism for implementing ruptures is overpoliteness: those cases with an external mismatch between the use of a highly polite formula and a context that makes it be out of place. Finally, the third group of means to execute ruptures joins together these cases in which the speaker shows a falsely collaborative attitude toward his interlocutor, a resource consisting mainly of performing certain speech acts (such as advice or recommendation) that, although possessing a polite profile, become (usually because of an external mismatch) impolite when they manifest, in parallel, the supposed ignorance of the interlocutor.

In short, therefore, we aimed, in essence, to clearly delimit the profile of ruptures as a way of implementing impolite attacks in electoral debates. That path has led us to a leisurely analysis on the nature of the linguistic means used for this purpose, with the result of making more transparent, even if only for a very specific aspect, the often cryptic means that move political discourse.

5. Transcriptions conventions

The text of the examples is, in general, regularised and standard punctuation marks are used. Speakers appear appointed by his last name, written in small capitals, and their interventions are separated by a blank line. However, when an overlap between the speakers takes place, the text appears without such a blank line between the interventions that overlap. Moreover, in these lines marking the overlapped utterance, the temporal flow of the utterance is reflected from left to right, putting the overlapping fragments below each other. When the line is once finished, overlap continues, a blank line appears and, again, the two lines join (each one corresponding to a voice) together. Other transcription conventions are also used:

text/	Slashes indicate a break in the utterance. Speaker interrupts himself.
text::	Double colon indicates a lengthening in pronunciation of a phoneme, either vowel or consonant.
[...]	Three dots in square brackets during the development of the example indicate an unintelligible passage (with a different space between the dots depending on the length of the passage). However, three dots in square brackets at the very beginning and/or end of the example indicate incomplete sentence structure (when it is considered unnecessary, in order to be brief, to incorporate it complete in the example).
[text]	Text in square brackets indicates a passage not completely intelligible and whose transcription, for that reason, it is not entirely reliable.
<u>text</u>	Underlining indicates emphatic pronunciation.
<text>	Text between angles is bounded to point at footnote any specific aspect about it (as can be, for example, a specific intonation) or any relevant extralinguistic circumstance that occurs during it (e.g. it has been pronounced among smiles).
[text]	Italics in square brackets add contextual information to the transcription.

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