INFLUENCE OF SITUATIONAL FACTORS ON THE CODIFICATION AND INTERPRETATION OF IMPOLITENESS

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Abstract

By analysing the influence of situational factors, this paper aims to determine if all face-threatening acts indeed have an impolite effect. Two types of peninsular Spanish speech corpora (formal and informal) were examined, each with different situational features. The theoretical maxims applied to this study are based on Briz (2004), who distinguishes between codified (im)politeness and an interpreted (im)politeness. The initial findings reveal that the features of the communicative situation may neutralise the codified impoliteness in certain speech acts. These features include the relation of solidarity between the interlocutors, the subject or topic of the speech, the purpose and the social and common proximity among the speakers, among others. Such features seem to influence to some extent the interpretation of those acts that conventionally could be considered as impolite. Thus, contrary to the principles generally accepted for Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness (1987), the findings of this analysis indicate that certain situational factors may, on occasion, lead the speakers to be less concerned about minimizing face offences even though this lack of concern does not actually involve damage to the other.

Keywords: impoliteness, communicative situation, face-threatening acts, Spanish oral corpora.

1. Introduction

Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed their theory of politeness to explain the need to redress possible offences to speakers’ faces. In this sense, it would be universally accepted that a face threat to the image of the other should be avoided or compensated. If the face-threatening act (FTA) takes place without repair, an impolite action may be carried out. However, as authors like Culpeper (1996), Kientpointner (1997), Zimmerman (2003), Briz (2004) and Bernal (2005) suggest, in some speech acts codified as face-threatening, there is a false effect of impoliteness, but it is not interpreted as such in the specific communicative situation. This pseudoimpoliteness is described as mock impoliteness (Culpeper 1996, 2005), ritual insults (Labov 1972, Kientpointner 1997), anti-politeness –mocking actions and insults- (Zimmerman 2003, Bernal 2005) or interpreted (im)politeness (Briz 2004). Following Labov (1972), Culpeper (1996) attributed this pseudoimpoliteness to certain social groups, normally groups low or marginal sociocultural ones groups. Zimmerman (2003: 57-59) characterized these groups as those of a certain age, namely young people, and those constructing their male gender identity. Likewise Bernal (2005) claimed this phenomenon is also present in groups of other speakers, not only young people and men.

My hypothesis is that the situational factors involved a conversational interaction influence the interpretation of (im)politeness, which in some cases will differ
from its codification. This hypothesis is based on Briz’s proposal (2004) which distinguishes codified politeness from interpreted politeness, which becomes, in some cases, impoliteness. The difference between what is codified and what is interpreted comes from a pragmatic analysis of the situational features in which linguistic speech takes place. This pragmatic study requires a non-ethnocentrist perspective to analyse social and linguistic politeness. Research into the configuration of face for non-English speakers has focused mainly on cultural factors, such as differences among countries, traditional ways and the like. This paper, however, emphasises the influence of situational features, comparing corpora of contrasting communicative situations and highlighting an aspect of politeness which has yet to be studied in full in the field of Pragmatics: the absence of correlation between what is said and what is interpreted.

To this end, this paper is divided into two parts. First, I shall describe the theoretical framework for this research: 1) what is understood by a communicative situation, 2) how politeness relates to the communicative situation in which it takes place and 3) what is considered codified and interpreted politeness. In the second part of the paper, I will illustrate the validity of my initial hypothesis by contrasting two types of corpora with different situational features, formal and informal. Finally, it’s my hope to determine if these external features can influence the interpretation of impoliteness and can remedy possible impolite outcomes.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. The communicative situation
Although frequently used as synonyms, the concepts of context and communicative situation should first be distinguished. On the one hand, context is the sum of all the extralinguistic factors that accompany a statement or a dialogue: cultural factors, geographic-spatial factors, sociological variables of the speakers (age, sex and sociocultural sector) as well as situational characteristics, that is, the features of the communicative situation (Briz and Val.Es.Co Group 2002: 18-19). On the other hand, the communicative situation or situation of use is a subgroup of all factors that form the context. The communicative situation is thus the extralinguistic component that integrates all the other elements; it is the final subgroup of characteristics that determine the selection of one linguistic form or another (Albelda 2004). Culture determines and restricts linguistic behaviours among speakers; the geographic variety of the language and culture enhance this process of restriction; the sociological variables even further limit the speakers’ linguistic choices. Consequently, in a given communicative situation, the speaker will make use of those forms considered appropriate (Briz and Val.Es.Co. Group 2002: 27, Albelda 2004: 114-115). It is in the specific communicative situation, the final result of all the aforementioned contextual circumstances, where linguistic values truly originate.

According to Briz (1998: 41) as well as Briz and Val.Es.Co. (2002: 18), the communicative situation depends on these four situational features:

1) the social and functional relationship between the speakers (relationships of power and solidarity)

1 The research group referred to as Val.Es.Co., Valencia Español Coloquial, studies different aspects of colloquial conversation from a corpus of the language spoken in the area of Valencia (Spain).
2) the existential relationship of proximity or distance (degree of knowledge and common experience between the interlocutors)
3) the interactional framework in which communication takes place (the physical space and the spatial relationship among speakers)
4) the subject matter (the topic or content of the discourse).

These situational features determine the degree of formality (more formal or more informal) of the communicative situation.

2.2. Politeness/impoliteness in informal and formal communicative situations

The dependent relationships of politeness on the communicative situation have been discussed by Lakoff (1973), Lim and Bowers (1991), Carrasco (1999), Bravo (1993, 1996, 2002), Hernández (2002) and Briz (2003, 2004) and Albelda (2004, 2007) among others. These authors agree that the features of the communicative situation determine the presence of (im)politeness and the value it acquires. Lim and Bowers (1991: 422) pointed out that “as intimacy increases, relational partners have more obligations to cooperate with each other and therefore become more willing to tolerate a certain level of imposition and criticism”. However, this does not mean that the use of polite strategies is less frequent in cases of greater familiarity (Carrasco 1999: 32, Hernández 2002: 107) nor that a greater degree of privacy necessarily leads to a greater tendency toward impoliteness (Culpeper 1996: 350-351), as confirmed through analyses of colloquial conversations containing face-flattering acts (FFAs) (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1996) and FTAs.

Furthermore, Hernández (2002) and Albelda (2004) indicated that, as in formal situations, the speaker usually projects his/her image before others in informal situations. Although in private the individual can “relax, take off the mask, leave his/her text and leave his/her character aside” (Goffman 1959), it does not imply that the efforts of the polite behaviour are avoided or that they are exceeded by the impolite ones. Leaving one’s mask aside does not mean that one’s image disappears but rather that one’s image is different, more sincere and authentic, the image without the mask. In informal situations social behaviour standards are also common, but “as they are less strict, the manifestations of politeness are less evident” (Hernández 2002: 107).

In formal situations there is also politeness as well as impoliteness. Although impoliteness is especially prevalent in political discourse (Blas Arroyo 2001, Bolívar 2003, see Bolívar’s contribution to this volume), potentially impoliteness is evident in other formal situations (Kientpointner 1997). In brief, both politeness and impoliteness appear in formal and informal situations, and this paper will show that there are qualitatively different types of (im)politeness depending on communicative situations (Carrasco 1999: 32).

2.3. Codified (im)politeness / interpreted (im)politeness

Impoliteness in each communicative situation may be classified as does Briz (2004), as codified (im)politeness or interpreted (im)politeness, since “polite activity depends on at least two persons” (Briz 2004: 67). Therefore, speech acts can be fully evaluated only if the context is considered. The concept of codified politeness refers to the polite

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2 Their analysis shows that politeness is not suspended in familiarity situations, in disagreement with Calsamiglia and Tusón (1999: 163). *Vid.* the criticism by Hernández (2002: 104).
interventions which are partially conventionalized or standardized in the language, since “one linguistic form is traditionally related to a specific polite strategy” (Briz 2004: 72). Thus, for example, different speech acts are codified in each language and culture (commands, suggestions, advice, desires), as are the formulas to attenuate or intensify them; different rituals or politeness formulas are also conventionalized (greetings, praise, expressions of agreement or disagreement). All this entails remaining on the codified level. However, when evaluating not just the act itself, but as it is integrated into the discourse as a whole, we often see that what is codified as polite is not always interpreted as such. At this level, in addition to the above, speakers’ reactions, their individual or group intentions, their conversational participation, for example, are judged since speech behaviour is restricted by a culture and determined by the situational characteristics. Therefore, codified linguistic forms are interpreted in the specific contexts, considering the situational characteristics.

Two other features augment the influence of the situational characteristics when interpreting (im)politeness (Briz 2004: 79-87): +/- linguistic and social acceptance of the other (agreement/disagreement) and +/- pertinence of ideoms, that is, common cultural components of image for each culture or social group, which implicates the person before the others. Impoliteness will be interpreted depending on the polarity and the degree of influence of these parameters (if they are positive or negative) and the situational characteristics.

The opposing codification/interpretation of (im)politeness is based on a dynamic conception of speech, one in which different structural units can be identified. In each of them, the conversational phenomena are analysed differently and each may lead to opposing conclusions. According to Briz et alii (2003), speech is organized around units in an external order and an internal order. On the external level, the conversation progresses by means of turns and alternation of turns (Briz et alii 2003: 14-28). On the internal level, two monological units are apparent, the act and the intervention (ibid. 31-45), as well as two dialogical units, the exchange and the dialogue (ibid. 28-30). The monological units are delivered by the same interlocutor without considering the relationship with the others; whereas the dialogical units involve the alternate presence of two or more interlocutors and, therefore, they are included in the study of these other extralinguistic factors, especially those of a social and situational nature. Further, at the level of act and intervention, it is only possible to consider codified politeness, since each act and intervention is an isolated linguistic action (Briz 2004: 71-73). However, in the exchange and dialog, the interpretation of politeness is more appropriate, since the altering of linguistic emissions by the different interlocutors allows for more dynamism in what is codified “to the extent that what is codified as polite is no longer polite; it can even be interpreted as impolite” (Briz 2004: 72; vid. Bravo 2002: 146). The specific case described herein aims to reveal that what may be understood as a threat (because it is conventionally codified as such in peninsular Spanish) is not always interpreted as in the particular communicative situation.

3. Analysis of impoliteness
The initial hypothesis is applied to a contrastive analysis of formal and informal interactions in three different corpora of peninsular Spanish. On the one hand, two

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3 In peninsular Spanish culture, self affirmation and trust (Bravo 1999 and Introduction to this volume).
spoken corpora with formal situational parameters were analysed: one of semi-controlled interviews between speakers of a high sociocultural level (Gómez (coord.) 2001) and another of transactional conversations recorded in a travel agency (Contreras 2004: II-XX). On the other hand is a corpus of colloquial conversations (Briz and Val.Es.Co. Group 2002). Two formal corpora were selected, as opposed to the single informal corpus, since the transactional purpose of both reduces greatly the appearance of (im)politeness and the work of social image. In order to draw valid conclusions, a larger number of samples is certainly needed; simultaneously, the fact that the same conclusions were reached in two different discursive modalities (interviews, conversations) but with the same situational characteristics, however, reinforces the hypothesis that the latter two influence the phenomenon of (im)politeness.

The corpus of interviews contains 24 interviews, elaborated to extract varied and sociolinguistic data from the interviewees. The characteristic situational features are:

5) relation of +/- social equality between interlocutors
6) relation of functional inequality
7) existential relation of mutual lack of knowledge
8) nonfamiliar and uncommon framework of interaction
9) non specialized subject matter.

The corpus of recordings in the travel agency consists of 8 conversations between an employee and different clients. The situational features include:

1) social equality between interlocutors
2) relation of functional inequality
3) existential relation of mutual lack of knowledge
4) nonfamiliar and uncommon framework of interaction
5) non specialized subject matter.

The informal corpus consists of 19 conversations, with these situational features:

1) the speakers maintain an existential relation of mutual knowledge
2) they share a mutual relation of social and functional equality
3) the interactional framework is familiar or common
4) the subject matter is not specialized.

In order to contrast the different corpora, the situational features were analysed in each as were the linguistic and social +/-acceptance of the other, the +/- pertinence of ideoms and, to study manifestations of impoliteness, the presence or absence of problematic subject matters (Briz 2004: 87). It should be noted that the existing relationship between the interlocutors (roles) and their sociocultural level is also indicated.

3.1. Analysis of the formal interactions
The results from the analysis of the two formal corpora are presented together, that is, the total set of interactions of the corpus since their features are similar (Table 1). These features include: 1) social relation of equality among speakers, 2) existential relation of proximity, 3) interpersonal purpose, 4) presence of ideoms of the Spanish culture (compromised image), 5) problematic subject matter, 6) acceptance, 7) common
interactional framework, 8) type of relationship between interlocutors and 9) sociocultural level.

Table 1 Situational features of formal interactions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORPUS</th>
<th>Relation equality speakers</th>
<th>Existential relation proxim.</th>
<th>Inter-personal purpose</th>
<th>Ideoms</th>
<th>Problem subject</th>
<th>Acceptance</th>
<th>Common interactio framew.</th>
<th>Type of relation</th>
<th>Socio-cultural level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gómez</td>
<td>+ -</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Interviewer</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contreras</td>
<td>+ -</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Interviewee</td>
<td>Employee Client</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in Table 1 indicate that the communicative situation of the interactions is formal; although the social and functional relation is mainly one of equality, there is no close existential relationship (lack of knowledge between interlocutors and absence of shared experiences), the purpose of the interactions is not interpersonal (socializing) but rather transactional, and the physical space (framework) in which the interaction takes place is not familiar for the speakers. In addition, there is a strong commitment to the image (+ ideoms), which, in turn, involves avoiding any problematic subject matter and favouring acceptance and agreement. The fact of being transactions emphasises the interlocutors' will to maintain good relationships, to be polite and to protect the image of the other. In these two formal corpora no explicit or open impolite situations were found, that is, intentionally sought (in terms of Culpeper 1996: 356, bald on record impoliteness).

However, without being +problematic, a detailed study of the interviews and conversations reveals cases in which the face-threatening acts are codified, despite their low frequency. Most of these acts are redressed or mitigated, since, due to their situational factors (formal), to not repair them would have led to their being interpreted as impolite. In the travel agency corpus, these acts are reduced to proposals formulated in a more or less direct manner (imperative, periphrasis of obligation, example 1), slight objections or recriminations (example 2), disagreements or presentation of disadvantages to the offers (example 3):

(1) *vosotros tenéis que mirar* a ver *QUÉ hotel os gusta más* (2Zanzíbar, 15-16)

(2) *A:* (...) y muchas veces hay muchas posibilidades que puedes cambiar ↓ una ciudad por otra ¿sabes?
*B:* *ya/ pero si no conocemos las ciudades/ pues tampoco tenemos el criterio para/ ¿sabes? elegir uno u otro/ ese es el problema* (Fjordos, 71-76)

(3) *A:* (...) *Copenhague Estocolmo Ooslo// y luego// interior de los Fjordos Oslo y Estocolmo (5’’) dieciséis días o dieciocho días

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4 The transcription signs used in the oral corpus herein are specified in Annex 1. These examples have been translated in a rather literal fashion for the reader (Annex 2); however, given the distinct conversational norms of English and Spanish, and exact rendition is not possible.
B: no/ dieciséis días/ lo que tampoco queremos es ir de maratón porque entonces
A: $no$ no claro (Fjordos, 49-53)

In the semicontrolled interviews, the face-threatening acts are even less frequent than in the other formal corpus. Their low percentage is, to a large extent, due to the formal situational features as well as the discursive and social standards that regulate this type of speech and the narrow margin of social and interaction dynamism that they allow (Albelda 2004: 126). One of these standards is the convenience of maintaining distance among the speakers; therefore, in general, the opinion of the informants is respected and creating or initiating verbal conflict is avoided.

On the other hand, as in the corpus of travel agency conversations, in the corpus of interviews, the degree of the acts that could be threatening is moderate, as seen in examples 4, 5 and 6.

In (4) the interviewer (A) disagrees with the informant (B); he does so by objecting to the opinion of the other speaker:

(4)  
B: mm yo lo que siempre hee intentado con la gente con la que trabajaba es e/ provocar esas inquietudes y esa curiosidad/ que ampliar su/ su horizonte (...) porque es quee realmente su único/ lo único que les motiva es e beberse una botella de litro de cerveza oo oo teñarse no sé cuántos étasis un fin de semana  
A: sí/ pero/ si fueras realmente madre/ porque a veces como psicóloga/ es fácil tomar esa postura esa actitud que tú tomas/ pero como madre  
B: mm realmente yo creo que la misma ¿eh?/ más o menos [JRG. 97-3.: 394-409]

Certain discrepancies are also verified, as example (5) shows. The informant, B, expresses her opinion about China; in the summary of her intervention she expresses the attraction she feels for the Chinese and, without any previous reference to the Japanese, she also includes them in her comments. The disagreement of A refers to the cultural diversity between the Chinese and the Japanese, which illustrates her disagreement with B for having compared them:

(5)  
A: cuéntanos tus ilusiones sobre China/ si tienes  
B: (...) aparte siempre me han atraído mucho tanto los chinos como los japoneses  
A: ¿sí?// hombre los japoneses están en esa línea también de disciplina/ y de trabajos/ etcétera etcétera/ los chinos no tanto pero bueno [JRG. 98-4: 374-382]

Nevertheless, the discrepancies in this corpus tend to be diminished, as indicated by the discourse marker pero bueno (5). Further, in example (6), the interviewer produces a face-threatening act, also of light intensity, reproaching B by means of the interjection ¡mujer! that reveals the brief and irrelevant response of A:

(6)  
A: pero ¿eso es sentirse solo/ es producto del individualismo de esta sociedad? ¿tú qué opinas?  
B: creo que es un poco de todo  
A: ¡mujer!  
B: un poco de todo (risas)/ pero es que no sé como explicarlo [JRG. 98-1: 144-157]
In both formal corpora, politeness strategies are constantly used to minimize the impact of different speech acts that, otherwise, could be threatening. Thus, it is common that in the travel agency corpus, the requests for information are moderated using conditionals (a ver sí me puedes...), justifying intentions (es que, porque) and attenuating requests (solo quería saber), etc.:

(7) quería saber→ eeh→ los precios de un billete paraa→ París (1París, 3-4)

(8) B: verá↓ e es que estaba buscando u un viaje para/ nuestra luna de miel y nos gustaría
ir a Zanzíbar// a ver si me puedes/ encontrar algo (2Zanzíbar, 3-5)

(9) mira↓ quería hacerte una pregunta→ porque resultaa→/ que me tengo que ir a Asturias→/ a MANchester→/ y entonces sólo quería saber el precio de idaa (5Manchester, 3-6)

In brief, as this analysis reveals, face-threatening acts are infrequent in the two formal corpora and those found are only slightly threatening and, what is more, they are immediately redressed. Since these situational features do not soften the acts codified and interpreted as impolite, the speakers themselves feel obliged to find an alternative to such impoliteness, and they do it by means of redress strategies. Nonetheless, in contrast to what is described in the following section, what is known pseudoimpoliteness was not identified in any case; thus, the situational features do not seem to favour their accomplishment.

3.2. Analysis of the informal conversations
Given the situational diversity of each conversation included in the informal corpus, the features analysed are not presented in block, but rather they are broken down for each conversation (Table 2):

Table 2 Situational features of formal interactions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONVERSATIONS</th>
<th>Relation equality speakers</th>
<th>Existential relation proxim.</th>
<th>Interpersonal purpose</th>
<th>Ideoms</th>
<th>Problem subject</th>
<th>Acceptance</th>
<th>Common interactio framew.</th>
<th>Type of relation</th>
<th>Socio-cultural level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H.38.A1</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+Friendship</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ML.84.A1</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Boy/girlfriend</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.15.A1</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.65.A1</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Neighbours</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP.80.A1</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+Friendship</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.82.A1</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.68.B1</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RB.37.B1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Employee/</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The combined marking with a positive (+) and a negative (-) sign in certain features of the table –note that these are not situational factors but sociolinguistic ones– indicates that during a given conversation there are sequences in which this feature is present or absent. The order of the signs is also relevant: (+-) the conversational feature appears more frequently; (-+) means that there are more sequences without the feature.
With regard to the type of relationship between the interlocutors, there are differences between this corpus and the two formal corpora. Here, the relationships are, in general, of family (with a greater or lesser degree of kinship), of friendship (also in different degrees) and other types of bonds created by the usual relationships of everyday life (work, neighbourhood). It is also interesting to consider the presence of ideoms (situations in which the image is more or less compromised), because they require greater attention to the care of social relationships and, hence, they may call for politeness strategies.

After analysing the data from the 19 colloquial conversations (Table 2), there are no problematic subject matters and no instances of impoliteness are found. In some, these subjects are constant throughout the entire conversation (H.38.A1, ML.84.A1, RV.114.A1, VC.117.A1), in others these problems are only evident in parts of the conversation (L.15.A1, S.65.A1, AP.80.A1, J.82.A1, MA.341.A1, PG.119.A1). In the four conversations where the +problems are constant, two other features appear: -acceptance and -ideoms (absence of face threats). These three features justify the presence of impoliteness as a substantial factor in these interactions. However, in the conversations in which there is only +problems momentarily, there is +acceptance, since politeness strategies were used to avoid the risk of face threatening.

Examine the different conversations in greater detail, it can be seen that the impoliteness style is distinct in each. In the informal corpus, three different manners of impoliteness were recorded: bald on record impoliteness (canonical), redressed impoliteness (by means of polite strategies) and mock impoliteness (Culpeper 1996: 352).

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6 In this case, the combination of the signs (-) and (+) refers to both types of relationship in this conversation: (-) for the relationship employee-employer (housekeeper/home owner), (+) for the family relationship (brothers/sisters and parents).

7 This sociolinguistic analysis contradicts the idea that greater familiarity leads to a greater degree of impoliteness heightened more frequent instances of impoliteness (Culpeper 1996: 350-351).

8 Culpeper (2005) recently proposed additional types of impoliteness.
Conversations [ML.84.A1], [RV.114.A1] and [VC.117.A1] mainly correspond to open and non redressed impoliteness: [ML.84.A1] is a lovers’ quarrel; in [RV.114.A1] and in [VC.117.A1], there are arguments between family members. Item (10) is an example of open impoliteness in the course of the lovers’ spat. Impoliteness is both codified and interpreted. The situational factors explain why there is no redress: the topic involves a disagreement, and the relationship between the interlocutors is close, with functional and social equality. Reproachful rhetorical questions, commands, insults and complaints are codified, in other words, threatening acts are interpreted as impoliteness:

(10)  B: DÍMÉL(0) / NO↓ DÍMÉL0/ ¿TÚ QUIERES QUE ESTÉ YO AQUÍ AGUANTANDO QUE TÚ ESTÉS MAL?§
A: § NO QUIERO QUE ESTÉS AGUANTANDO
B: ENTonces ¿¡QUÉ QUIERES QUE HAGA!/? ¡OSTRAS! ES QUE/ ¡JODER!
A: BUENO↓ YA ESTÁ BIEN/ VES POR QUE→/ ES QUE NO/ DE VERDAD↓ NO LO ENTENDIENDO↓SIEMPRE PASA LO MISMO
B: vale↓ no chilles ¡joder! (…) tío/ tú estás de sicólogo↓ nano/ ¡yo flipo!


Redressed impoliteness is frequent in the conversations with momentary thematic problems: in these cases distinguishing between codified/interpreted impoliteness is irrelevant, because the strategies of positive and negative politeness (using the terminology of Brown and Levinson 1987) one responsible for redressing or avoiding the occurrence of threat9. The rest of this section will focus on false impoliteness.

The typical conversation that best illustrates this type of impoliteness in the corpus Val.Es.Co. is conversation [H.38.A1], frequently commented in the works on the subject (Zimmerman 2003, Briz 2003, 2004, Bernal 2005 and in this volume). However, its presence is more pronounced in the analysed corpus, since informal communicative situations favour this type of imbalance between acts codified as threats yet not interpreted as impolite. Thus, these imbalances were found in other conversations in the corpus Val.Es.Co. and the different informal situational features make it possible.

In the following extract (11), interlocutors G and L openly express an opinion contrary to E, so that a disagreement is codified at the level of the act, but in the structural unit of the exchange (dialog) is not interpreted as impolite. The topic of the sequence, the intention of the speakers and the friendship that binds them are situational features that prevent any interpretation of impoliteness. Speakers G and C do not wish to offend E’s face, but quite the contrary, they aim to enhance it.

(11)  E: sí/ yo conozco gente// parece muy liberal pero// la verdad es que soy muy conservadora
L: mujer/ en todo no↓ "(tía)"§
E: yo sí/ liberala- soy conservadora en− pues en lo que interesa como to’l mundo// pero vamos no soy nada liberal↓ lo contrario// lo que pasa↑ es que yo respeto mucho lo que dice la gente↓ a mí- cada uno que haga lo que quiera yy

9 Beyond the scope of this paper, this type of impoliteness is well-studied in other research. For an in-depth study of this type of redressed impoliteness in peninsular Spanish vid. Bravo (1993, 1996), Hernández (2002).
L: yo por ejemplo no lo haría
E: bien yo qué sé yo por ejemplo ↑ no sé/ a mí me parece muy bien lo que hace cada uno ↓ que yo no estoy de acuerdo ↑ no quiere decir que yo le critique /// ¿(entiendes?)°
G: pues ya está/ entonces eres liberal ↑ porque el ser liberal empieza por uno mismo
E: vamos a ver/ ser liberal ¿por que YO- yo me rijo por unas normas ↑/ y yo conservoo/ unn- yo qué sé§
G: § pues ya está [L.15.A2: 365-381]

Speaker E tries to make her friends (L and G) see that she is not a liberal and, consequently, does not adapt to the ideology common to her condition. L and G reject E’s self appraisal, but rather draw attention to the positive values of their friend, who defines herself negatively. Therefore, impoliteness cannot be interpreted from these speech acts of disagreement.

Example (12) illustrates another instance in which impoliteness is neutralised given the feature of solidarity among the participants. The speakers of this conversational fragment are bound by friendship; in addition, there is a mutual relationship of functional and social equality while the interactional framework is common; they are on familiar ground at the meeting place and they all belong to the club. There is a difference in opinions: speaker A, a woman, expresses a negative opinion of her body; S, a man, recriminates her with a rhetorical question; A rejects the recrimination of S and disagrees with his judgement (¡OY QUE NO!) and, finally S expresses disagreement again and almost insults (tú flipas), criticizing his listener. Although threats are codified on the monological level, these are not interpreted as such in this situation on the dialogical level; on the contrary, S’s intention is to offer a flattering comment to positively assess his friend’s physical appearance and consequently, he actually compliments her:

(12) J: mira↓ Láser Medicina/ hablando de láser
A: pos eso es lo que nesesito yo↓ porque yo tengo el cuerpo todo etropea↓ sí yo no voy mal encaminá (RISAS)
S: ¿tú tienes el cuerpo estropeado?
A: ¡OY QUE NO!

In the following example, (13), the possible conflict that could cause the codified act to be impolite, from the echo and rhetorical question, is not interpreted as such. ¿¡Cómo me voy a quedar?! is a statement that not only expresses denial but it also reproaches the interlocutor; a discourse marker hombre is also added, which in this case reinforces the reproach. However, this act takes place in a friendly conversation and the variety of situational features cancel any impolite interpretation: interpersonal purpose, relationship of solidarity as well as social and functional equality among speakers, existential relation of proximity, absence of ideoms. In addition, as observed in the context, the feature +acceptance is met in the listeners, since they do not declare feeling threatened.

(13) S: ya te quedas ¿no?/// la- a la reunión que tenemos luego
A: ¿a qué reunión?§
J: § ¿a qué hora la tenéis↓ Sergio?
S: a las diez
As the analysis of the corpus reveals, false impoliteness or pseudoimpoliteness is frequent in colloquial conversations. Codified acts are threats that do not involve the interpretation of impoliteness, and they can even reinforce solidarity within the group (Culpeper 1996: 353, Bravo 1999, 2002). In fact, one of the social values that has been attributed to the Spanish culture is that the existence of conflicts is not contradicted with the social image being accepted and fruitful (Bravo 1999: 169). In fact, in cases of a close interpersonal relationship, if a speaker is very polite with his/her interlocutor, the latter may take offence or note mistrust on the part of his/her hearer. That impoliteness is a manifestation of confidence and of the relation of proximity in certain situations is yet another argument against the universal concept of image postulated by Brown and Levinson (1987). Many of the acts that Brown and Levinson considered as impolite are actually just the opposite: in certain sequences of the corpus of colloquial conversations: in these communicative situations the biunivocal relation between acts codified as threats and their interpretation as impolite is frequently broken up. In many conversations the speakers produced such codified acts at the monological level, but without any intention in the communicative exchange of being impolite, as is the case, for example, of all conversation [H.38.A1]. This happens fundamentally in situations of social proximity and equal relations; the framework of the interaction is common and the social face is not compromised (-ideoms). However, in the formal interactions, on the one hand, no case of disruption between codification and interpretation of impoliteness was documented; on the other hand, codified impoliteness barely appears. The analysis confirms the initial hypothesis of this paper; the absence of pseudoimpoliteness in the formal corpus and its presence in the informal corpus are clear evidence of how situational features influence the interpretation of impoliteness. In general, the influence of the situational features on the linguistic phenomena should be extrapolated to any analysis into the codified/interpreted opposition.

The phenomenon called here pseudoimpoliteness has been explained as a desire to offer an anti-standard attitude for the components of a given generational group. Thus, according to Zimmerman, “in interpersonal relationships between young males who maintain friendly or group identity relationships, the constitution of the generational identity is achieved, on the contrary, by means of anti-politeness strategies” (Zimmerman 2003: 58). However, as noted throughout this study, and specially in section 2.2., the disruption between what is codified as impolite and its varied interpretation is not just due to cases described as mock impoliteness in the literature, whose function is to reinforce an identity within a certain social group (Labov...
1972, Culpeper 1996, Zimmerman 2003). This pseudoimpoliteness involves other functions in the peninsular Hispanic culture. On the one hand, its function is sometimes to facilitate and/or promote the group affiliation -and not only between young males (Bernal 2005 and paper in this volume)- (see example 13), because threatening acts at the codified level are interpreted as an expression of trust, which has nothing to do with an anti-standard attitude. On the other hand, as illustrated in examples 11 and 12, the acts codified as threatening may be interpreted as just the opposite: they enhance the image of the targeted interlocutor. In this sense, to justify the phenomenon under study, to the features suggested by Labov (1972) and Zimmerman (2003) it would be necessary to add the informal situational features (Briz and Val.Es.Co. 2002: 18 and following): existential relationship of proximity between speakers, social and/or functional equality among the speakers, familiar and common interactional framework and non-specialized subject matter.

It is crucial to note the relevance in this analysis in terms of targeting and distinguishing the different structural levels of the conversation and studying each one for the pragmalinguistic phenomena, since they can lead to different results. In this case, impoliteness has a distinct impact on monological conversation units (act and intervention) and dialogic (exchange and dialogue) ones.

REFERENCES


**Annex 1. Transcription key**
The following symbols are used herein as developed for the Val.Es.Co. corpus:

- **A:** Intervention of interlocutor identified as A.
- **§** Immediate succession, without noticeable pause, between emissions of different speakers.
- **=** Maintaining the turn of a participant in overlapping.
- **[** Place where overlapping or superposition begins.
- **]** End of simultaneous speech.
- **-** Re-starts and self-interruptions without pause.
- **/** Short pause, less than half a second.
- **//** Pause between half a second and one second.
- **///** Pause of one second or more.
- **(5")** Five-second silence; time is indicated in pauses of more than one second, when it is particularly significant.
- **↑** Rising intonation.
- **↓** Falling intonation.
- **→** Maintained or suspended intonation.
- **PESADO** Noticeable or emphatic pronunciation (two or more capital letters).
- **((   ))** Indecipherable fragment.
- **((siempre))** Questionable transcription.
- **(en)tonces** Reconstruction of a lexical unit that has not been completely uttered or when it hinders comprehension.
- **°(      )°** Fragment uttered softly or almost whispering.
- **aa/ nn** Vocalic enlargements/ Consonant enlargements.

**Annex 2. Translation of examples**

(1) ‘You two need to decide WHICH hotel you like best’

(2) ‘A: (...) and often there are many possibilities that you can change one city for another, you know? B: yeah/ but if we don’t know the cities then we don’t have any reference too/ you know? choose one or another /that is the problem’

(3) ‘A: (...) Copenhagen Stockholm Ooslo/// and then// the interior of the Fjords Oslo and Stockholm (5") sixteen days or eighteen days B: no/ sixteen days/ we don’t want to do a marathon either ‘cause then§ A: § no no of course not’

(4) ‘B: mm what I have always tried to do with the people I worked with is to/ make them restless and curious/ to expand their horizons (...) because what really motivates them/ is to drink a litre of beer or- or take I don’t know how much extasis at the weekends A: yes/ but/ if you really were a mother/ because sometimes as a psychologist/ it is easy to take that position that attitude that you take/ but as mother B: mm I really believe it is the same, don’t you?/ kind of’
A: talk about your dreams of China/ if you have any
B: (...) besides I've always been interested in both the Chinese and the Japanese
A: really?? man the Japanese are also disciplined/ and hardworkers/ and so on/ the Chinese not so much but well’

B: (...) besides I've always been interested in both the Chinese and the Japanese
A: really?// man the Japanese are also disciplined/ and hard workers/ and so on/ the Chinese not so much but well”

A: but is that being lonely/ is it the result of individualism in this society? what do you think?
B: I think it is a bit of everything
A: c’ mon!
B: a bit of everything (laughter)/ but I don’t know how to explain it’

I wanted to know (eh) (laughter)/ the price of a ticket toooo/ Paris’

B: you see (e) I wanted to find a trip for our honeymoon and we’d like to go to Zanzibar/// see if you can/find something for me’

listen (e) I wanted to ask you a question (e) because it turns out I have to go to Asturias (e) to MANchester (e) and so I just wanted to know the one way fare’

B: SAY IT/ NO/ SAY IT/ YOU WANT ME HERE PUTTING UP WITH YOU ‘CAUSE YOU FEEL BAD??
A: § I DON’T WANT YOU TO PUT UP WITH ANYTHING
B: THEN WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO!! SHIT! IT’S DAMN!
A: WELL (e) THAT’S ENOUGH/ YOU SEE (e) IS THAT NO/ REALLY (e) I DON'T UNDERSTAND (e)
IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME
B: OK (e) don’t damn it! (e) man/ you need a shrink (e) man/ It's amazing!”

E: yes/ I know people/ I look very liberal but/ the truth is that I am very conservative
L: c’ mon / not in everything↓
E: I am/ liberal- I am conservative in- well in what is interesting like everybody// but I am not at all liberal↓ quite the contrary/// the problem what I mean is that↑ I highly respect what people say↓ for me people can do what they want and
L: for example I wouldn’t do it
E: well what do I know for example↑ I don't know/ I think it’s ok what each one does↓ if I don't agree↑ it does not mean that I’m criticizing/// "(do you understand?)”
G: that’s it/ then you are liberal↓/ because being liberal begins with oneself
E: let's see/ being liberal because I follow the rules↑ and I still keep/ I don’t know what§
G: § well that's it’

J: look↓ Laser Surgery/speaking of laser
A: so that’s what I need ↓ because my body’s totally trashed ↓ yeah, I got it all wrong (LAUGHTER)
S: your body trashed?
A: YOU BET!
S: you are out of your mind’

S: you are staying/ aren’t you??// for our meeting later
A: what meeting.§
J: § what time is it↓ Sergio?
S: at ten
J: at ten?
A: no way?/ noo ↓ how can I possibly stay!/? man ↓ gotta eat and all
S: eat and all?
A: and the kid/ down there alone (…)’