



Assessing impoliteness-related language in response to a season's greeting posted by the Spanish and English Prime Ministers on Twitter

M^a Milagros del Saz-Rubio

Department of Applied Linguistics, Universitat Politècnica de València, Cami de Vera s/n 46022, València, Spain



ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 1 August 2022

Received in revised form 11 January 2023

Accepted 17 January 2023

Available online 6 February 2023

Keywords:

Impoliteness-related language

Tweet events

Expressive speech-acts

Moral order

Technologically-mediated communication

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes impoliteness-related language in response to a season's greeting posted by the Prime Ministers of Spain and the UK on December 2022 to wish Twitter users a Felices Fiestas/Merry Christmas. A corpus made up of the first 500 tweet events mentioning Sánchez and Johnson with the @ feature was analyzed through the combination of qualitative and quantitative tools and an impoliteness2 approach to compare the most commonly deployed impoliteness strategies in response to what is felt as an offense by respondents from the two cultures. Previous impoliteness taxonomies inform the analysis (Culpeper, 1996, 2011). Findings reveal a preference for on-record strategies vs. off-record ones in both corpora. Whereas the English respondents oriented themselves towards attacking the negative face of the Prime Minister and that of other participants with sarcasm and implicated impoliteness, the Spanish group deployed impoliteness-related language to disparage the Prime Minister's positive face through insults and the rectification of his words. The hostile acts and explicit metalanguage about emotional states in the replies to the expressive speech act corroborate the perceived breach of some aspects of the moral order on the part of the Twitter users in the out-group, hence aiding the already observed polarization of political discussions.

© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Politicians' use of social media is a ubiquitous practice that has significantly altered the way political communication has been carried out over the past two decades (Grant et al., 2010; Gulati and Williams, 2010). Social media have the potential to bridge the gap between politicians and their likely voters (Coleman and Blumler, 2009), and the use politicians make of online communication can undoubtedly influence the citizens' interest and involvement in political activities. One example was the successful 2008 Obama US Election Campaign, which somehow contradicted those who believed that social media provided little room for citizen engagement (Harfoush, 2010; Hendricks and Denton, 2010).

In this respect, traditional one/two-dimensional political communication has become multidimensional interactive networked communication, thus allowing exchanges between multiple senders and receivers and allowing politicians to deploy a more personal and less institutionalized style of speech. In other words, politicians purportedly intermesh their personal and professional contexts into a one-self presentation arena to bring together "commonly distinct audiences" (Marwick and

E-mail address: masaru@idm.upv.es.

boyd, 2010: 115) in the face of *context collapse*. This notion, employed in relation to social networking sites, refers to the bringing together of different social groups into the same digital space for interaction, along with the subsequent adaptation of the users' strategies in addressing their imagined networked audiences. One direct consequence of all this has been increased online political communication between the two parts (cf. Wright et al., 2016), especially in the field of online political debate, as the number of media platforms for the exchange of opinions has multiplied and this, in turn, has provided audiences with many and newer forms of media usage.

Despite this, recent research has stated that online political communication constitutes a site for escalating impoliteness and aggression (cf. Vladimirov et al., 2021). For example, the affordances of digital technologies like Twitter have been shown to facilitate the polarization of political ideas, a tendency to extremism, and the deployment of aggression against other participants in debates of a political nature (Vraga et al., 2015). This can be explained considering that Twitter, as is the case with other social media, fosters not only engagement with people holding different views and values in what has been referred to as *trench warfare dynamics* but also with (primarily) like-minded people in so-called *echo chambers*, mainly through selective exposure to information (Stroud, 2017). In any case, the existing literature indicates that when exposed to both situations, participants tend to reinforce already-held beliefs through facing contradictory and/or supporting arguments, a situation that is aided by the internet environment and which results in 'in-group cohesion' vs. 'out-group aversion' (Karlsen et al., 2017). In simpler words, escalation to aggression on social media can be either the result of mimesis; that is, respondents facing an aggressive reply— which confirms and reinforces their own opinions— might tend to echo the aggressiveness in their response; or, on the contrary, when met with opposing views, respondents may become more polarized in their own opinions through a process of disconfirmation bias.

Taking all this into consideration, this paper explores impoliteness-related discourse¹ directed toward the official Twitter accounts of the Spanish and British Prime Ministers (PMs), Pedro Sánchez-Castejón (PS) and Boris Johnson (BJ), in reply to the season's greetings in which they officially wished the population *Felices Fiestas/Merry Christmas* on December 23rd and 24th, respectively, within the context of the six-wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Accordingly, this study aims to contribute to the extant literature on how impolite language is deployed in technologically-mediated communication through a contrastive lens. Likewise, it seeks to contribute to the exploration of the role of rude and aggressive language as a critical aspect of the moral order while also aiming to unveil differences and similarities in the face-attacking strategies deployed to convey disagreement with the two seasonal greetings in the two cultures under assessment. Finally, by looking into one specific speech act, I also aim to contribute to complementing the incipient but fruitful literature on speech acts in digital communication (cf. Carretero et al., 2015; Maíz-Arévalo, 2017; Tsoumou, 2021 on expressives and Angouri and Tseliga, 2010; Yang, 2021 on disagreements, inter alia).

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the notion of expressive speech-acts, introduces the affordances of the micro-blogging site Twitter and focuses on impoliteness in social media and critical studies with particular attention to the notion of morality, to finally present the research questions that guide this work. After that, Section 3 describes the present study. Section 4 comments on the corpus, methods and analytical procedure followed. Next, in Section 5, the quantitative and qualitative analysis results are discussed, while Section 6 wraps up this paper with concluding remarks in response to the questions raised. Finally, Section 7 offers venues for further research.

2. Literature review

2.1. Season's greetings

Season's greetings belong to the category of *expressive* speech acts (Searle, 1976). Weigand's dialogic model (2010) understands speech acts as jointly produced and interpreted by the speaker and hearer, and she labels these 'socially-expected expressives' *declaratives*.² In other words, in the case of well-wishing acts, the act is not complete until there is a reaction on the part of the hearer, i.e., a "Thank you", the issuing of a wish back, or an ensuing silence if there is no compliance with the act. According to Haverkate (1993: 149–50), hearer-centered expressives (i.e., expressing condolences, compliments, or wishing a happy birthday) perform polite functions as they serve affiliative purposes and boost the hearer's positive face (Brown and Levinson, 1987). They have a key role in facework or social rituals to the point that "the absence of these expected expressives can be perceived as marked and eventually lead to social disruptiveness" (Maíz-Arévalo, 2017: 154).

Despite their alleged role in the maintenance of facework, the dialogic expressive speech acts carried out by PS and BJ seem to serve the opposite function; that is, respondents take the original posts (OPs) as an offense and, in turn, feel compelled to express their disagreement with them through the deployment of offensive and impolite language against what they consider to be a transgression/breach of the moral order, i.e. 'the normal state' (Kádár, 2017). Thus, the replies include inherently

¹ Before I proceed, a clarification regarding the terminology employed in this paper is necessary. The label impoliteness, and thus, impoliteness-related discourse (as a second-order notion) is used as an umbrella term to refer to inappropriate verbal behaviour. It is sometimes employed interchangeably with other lay/first-order terms such as "rude, offensive or aggressive" (Watts, 2008), each of which has its own semantic characteristics. Culpeper (2011: 72) also proposes the label "impoliteness" as a cover term for these related labels, while Parvaresh (2019) employs 'aggressive' and 'impolite' as synonyms.

² This label employed in Weigand's dialogic model should be distinguished from the term *declarative* as employed in other speech-act models, especially Searle's (1975) taxonomies, in which declaratives are speech acts whose utterance effects immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and which include utterances such as excommunicate, christen, etc.

impolite and socially and morally sanctioned hostile illocutionary acts of a disagreeing nature that are common in “conflictive interpersonal situations, such as confrontations, disagreements, arguments, power struggles, etc.” (Blanco-Salgueiro, 2008: 5) and which defy the expected and preferred response in a dialogic exchange of this sort. Additionally, by engaging in face-threatening behavior against a political figure respondents enhance their own group face by antagonizing the outsider, hence aiding the escalating nature of the impolite exchange. This contrast in tone and the subsequent escalating impoliteness triggered by a dispreferred adjacency pair in response to a positive initial opening sequence motivated this study.

2.2. Twitter

Twitter is a real-time microblogging site (Java et al., 2007) that started as an SMS-text-based service in 2006. Although it initially limited the message length to 140 characters, Twitter has grown to accept length-delimited tweets (up to 280 characters), which Zappavigna (2014: 139) labels “micro-posts” and that can include personal thoughts, reactions, and comments on affairs, both public and private, responses to others, repetition of others' words, together with new posts, and direct reporting of events. These affordances privilege real-time posts that are short and simplistic over more nuanced or complex arguments, as would be the case of Facebook. In addition, Twitter can be seen as a platform for condensed, albeit potentially rich, and variably private performances of the self. In this vein, Twitter has been characterized as a peripheral awareness system that facilitates social grooming (Marwick and boyd, 2010).

Twitter has recently become a critical online space for political communication. Politicians across Western democracies have all jumped on the bandwagon of Twitter as they are fully aware of its power for reducing asymmetries (cf. Enli and Skogerbø, 2013) and supporting a democratization process of participation. While some researchers have highlighted the importance social networking sites like Twitter have for the political arena (cf. Papacharissi, 2014), others have criticized how they are used for political discourse.

Despite the promising affordances that Twitter and other social media offer, the opponents of their growth as a tool for political debate have put the onus on the growing uncivilized behavior on the internet, and in particular, in discourses of a political nature (cf. Brundidge, 2010; Rüssel, 2017). Scholars have been concerned with the fact that—as social networking sites favor an increasing exposure to heterogeneous information that can lead to potential disagreement, the reactions towards this content might not fulfill the expectations of public deliberation both in tone and content (Freelon, 2013; Stroud et al., 2014).³

Accordingly, a growing line of inquiry has turned to the pragmatic study of impolite/uncivil discourse in technologically-mediated communication⁴ (cf. Graham, 2007; Turnage, 2008; Haugh, 2010; Danet, 2013; Mak et al., 2014; Oz et al., 2018; Sinkeviciute, 2018). Most studies have identified social anonymity, asynchronicity, and the low accountability of online communication as the key aspects responsible for uncivil conduct in online political debate since they foster aggressive and anti-social behavior through a process of deindividuation (cf. Papacharissi, 2004; Coe et al., 2014). For example, Sinkeviciute (2018: 273) states that “disagreement in digital interactions, especially if unmitigated, can easily lead to confrontation among interlocutors”.

2.3. Impoliteness and studies on (im)politeness in digital communication

Despite the lack of consensus on impoliteness or impolite behavior, most researchers seem to agree that impoliteness is associated with face-threatening behavior that leads to face loss (cf. Culpeper, 2007; Bousfield, 2008; Terkourafi, 2008; Garcés-Conejos, 2010a, b). Other aspects, such as the speaker's intention to be impolite or the hearer's evaluation of an utterance as (im)polite, bear different weight in different approaches to the notion (cf. Culpeper, 2005; Bousfield, 2008). For this study, “impoliteness is best defined as a negative attitude towards specific behaviors occurring in specific contexts” and thus, impoliteness is thought to be “sustained by expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social organization” (Culpeper, 2011: 23). More precisely, on the microblogging site under analysis, impoliteness will refer to those communicative behaviors which run contrary to the norms and conventions of civility that rule the exchange on this site and which constitute either individual or face-attacks against other participants.⁵

However, traditional models of (im)politeness have been said to be of little use in digital communication or in microblogging sites like Twitter, where replies to tweets are to be explained within a participation framework that significantly differs from the one that rules face-to-face interaction. In this respect, “the rule of self-respect and the rule of considerateness” (Goffman, 1967: 11) that apply in face-to-face interaction, where both speakers and hearers have the keeping of their faces and that of their interlocutors as their goal, is suspended in digital communication. Anonymity, impersonality, and asynchronicity can lead to a loss of self-awareness and straightforward expression of negative emotions (Derks et al., 2008).

³ This information overflow created by the Internet and social media and the exposure to a more heterogeneous information has been put forward to challenge the *echo chamber dynamics* thesis.

⁴ I will use the notion *technologically-mediated* or *digital communication* indistinctly drawing on recent research by Bou-Franch, P., and Conejos-Blitvich, P. (2018).

⁵ I consider that both approaches to the notion of impoliteness are non-exclusive considering that deviations from expectations or norms have been postulated as a common denominator in the way impoliteness is accounted for (cf. Haugh, 2010; Sifianou and Tzanne, 2010).

Respondents to a tweet hardly ever come face-to-face with the person posting it or with the other participants. This increases disinhibition and urgency to convey their views, overriding the expected civility (Kaul and Cordisco, 2014). On top of it, responses to a tweet include not only the author of the original tweet but also a much larger audience, sharing a “public and multiparty quality” (Ermida, 2013: 96).

Against this backdrop, an extensive line of research has been carried out on impoliteness in technologically-mediated environments, especially microblogging sites of a social nature. For example, Hairetdin (2018) studied impoliteness in Tumblr, incorporating the variable of gender and taking Culpeper's (1996) model as a starting point. Her results indicated that *Taboo words* were the most frequent category, followed by *Calling the other names* and *Displaying scorn*, all positive impoliteness strategies. *Ordering the other what to do* was the next most frequent negative impoliteness strategy. Men preferred *Taboo words* and *Insults*, whereas women tended to *Scorn* or *Dissociate* from others. In a similar vein, YouTube-based interactions have been extensively assessed in the work of Garcés-Conejos Blitvich (2010a,b), Garcés-Conejos Blitvich et al. (2013), Lorenzo-Dus (2009), and Lorenzo-Dus et al. (2011). These authors reported a preference for direct and deliberate attacks toward the positive face wants of one's polylogal co-participants while also pointing to the necessary adaptation of previous taxonomies to polylogal situations in which polarization was linked to positive face attacks. In other studies, Mancera and Pano (2013) carried out a pragmalinguistic analysis of the resources that citizens and journalists deploy on Twitter to bash politicians during election time while highlighting the high degree of polarization of political ideas on this site. Díaz-Pérez (2014), on his part, focused on the linguistic procedures for lexical creation on Twitter from the perspective of impoliteness and concluded that participants deployed impolite language alongside humor and irony to create a personal style and surprise the audience.

2.4. The moral turn to impoliteness

Recent research has contributed to the emergence of a moral turn in (im)politeness studies, thereby confirming the evaluative nature of impoliteness and the moral basis of impolite evaluations (cf. Xie, 2018). The moral dimension of impoliteness has been approached by Haugh (2010, 2013), Kádár and Haugh (2013), Kádár and Márquez-Reiter (2015), and Davis (2018), to name but a few. These studies view perceived violations of the moral order and breaches of social norms or principles as intimately related to conflict and aggression. The ‘moral order of things’ is “an order in the sense that both individuals and social groups expect the structure and style of interactions to unfold in what they perceived as an ‘orderly’ way” (Kádár et al., 2019: 9). The moral order applies not only to standard situations, in which rights and obligations are crucial but also to any interpersonal situation or ‘familiar scenes’.

In this vein, there has been a growing interest in impoliteness in digitally-mediated environments (Graham and Hardaker, 2017), considering that the internet offers a “new vision of sociality” (Mey, 2018) where the use of impolite language and conflict is rife. According to Janicki (2017), conflict signifies a discursive struggle over differing ideologies based on contradictory notions of (in)justice. In other words, if the rights and obligations that the moral order evokes are violated, or if a person is thought to have upset the moral order, face-threats (Goffman, 1981) can be triggered due to this trespassing, with consequent moral reactions. On its part, the polylogal and anonymous nature of many online exchanges, together with a multiplicity of potential audiences, constitutes a fruitful ground for the occurrence of moral indignation (Garfinkel, 1956) in a wide variety of scenarios, as attested by the publication of the special issue “(Im)politeness and Moral Order in Online Interactions” in the journal *Internet Pragmatics* (1:2, 2018). In this vein, Parvaresh (2019) aims to investigate what causes these aggressive manifestations from a socio-cognitive perspective (Locher and Watts, 2005, 2008) by putting forward the ‘Basic Moral Perspective’ which users bring to the interactions and which he defines as “the moral disposition which interactants possess” (Parvaresh, 2019: 79). The Basic Moral Perspective is a core moral competence. In other words, although the interactants belong to complex social groups, they share several core values with roots in moral values that seem to underlie their online behavior. In contexts where participants lack relational contact, there are socially-shared assumptions and expectations that interactants claim to have been breached to justify their use of aggressive or impolite language. Put differently, “while language aggression is caused by many different (psychological) factors, it has been argued that one's moral values have a strong bearing on (verbal) aggression (Haidt 2012; Kádár, 2017)” (Parvaresh, 2019: 82).

More specifically, when it comes to political affairs, the moral order refers to what is expected of politicians in their conduct, as they are usually thought to be “moral servants who put aside any personal gain” (Georgakopoulou and Vasilaki, 2018: 2). Notwithstanding, this morality expected from and attributed to politicians contrasts with the perception that there is an increasing distrust in political figures and political institutions in European democracies (cf. Pharr and Putnam, 2000; Torcal, 2014; Torcal and Montero, 2006). Amongst the most salient arguments for this stand those of an exogenous nature, such as the economic crises and the harsh austerity measures that European countries have had to face to a shorter or larger extent, together with endogenous justifications such as the belief that political representatives are unresponsive to citizen's needs (cf. Alesina and Wacziarg, 2000; Torcal, 2014) or the fact that they are perceived as corrupt. In view of this situation, as argued in Georgakopoulou and Vasilaki (2018), networked audiences—as disenchanting recipients of the politician's misconduct—feel legitimized to reassess the moral order whenever they feel a political figure has breached any aspect of it.

3. The present study

Despite all the studies mentioned above, no research has been carried out to contrastively assess the impoliteness strategies deployed on the micro-blogging site Twitter to reply to disagreeing hostile acts in English and Spanish to an expressive issued by a political figure. Considering preliminary observations that attest to the highly oppositional nature of the replies received, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- Research question 1: How is impoliteness realized in the online polylogal exchanges generated in response to the seasonal greetings of the Spanish and British Prime Ministers and what are the main categories to deploy it?
- Research question 2: Is there any quantitative difference in the distribution frequency of the super strategies and sub-strategies identified in the two corpora under study? If so, what could be the cultural motivations for this?
- Research question 3: What moral order issues seem to trigger the impolite responses in each corpus?

However, before I proceed, some clarifications are in order. Impoliteness has been long conceptualized from within an either (*im*)*politeness*₁ or an (*im*)*politeness*₂ approach. These two labels somewhat correspond to Watts et al.'s (1992: 30) notions of *first-order politeness (emic)* and *second-order politeness (etic)*; that is: “the various ways in which polite behavior is perceived and talked about by members of sociocultural groups” and “a term within a theory of social behavior and language usage”, respectively. Early work on impoliteness by Culpeper and Bousfield in the mid-1990s and during the 2000s was undoubtedly influential. It resulted in several taxonomies of impoliteness strategies within second-order approaches, most of which were devised as a reversal of Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness (cf. Lachernitch, 1980; Culpeper, 1996).

To investigate user interaction online and how impolite/face-attacking language is contrastively deployed in response to the two OPs, the approach taken here mainly complies with *impoliteness*₂ studies. However, a close inspection of the participants' explicit evaluations of impolite exchanges in reply to the OPs and other respondents has been carried out. This has allowed me to corroborate the inflammatory tone of some of the exchanges as already detected by the researcher, as shown in the replies to some participants' posts illustrated in Fig. 1 below.

<p>Cxxxxxxxxxxxxx5 replies to @BorisJohnson</p>	<p>@BorisJohnson As expected, lots of nasty replies to this. When someone wishes you Merry Christmas and you feel the need to reply with an insult, you really need to take a long, hard look at yourself, put Twiter away and have a think about how you can be a better, nicer person.</p>
<p>Jxxxxxxxxxxxxxas replies to @sanchezcastejon</p>	<p>@sanchezcastejon Yo te deseo una rápida salida del gobierno. A ti y a tus socios. Que la Navidad haga su magia y el año que viene estés en tu casa dando por cul0 solo a los tuyos. Paz y amor! @sanchezcastejon I wish you a quick exit from government. To you and your partners. Let Christmas do its magic and I hope next year you stay at home and be a burden to your family. Peace and love!</p>
<p>Mxxxxxxxxxp replies to Jxxxxxxxxxxxxxas, @sanchezcastejon</p>	<p>@Jxxxxxxxxxxxxxas @sanchezcastejon y tu aprende a respetar a los demás que eso es lo que te falta! Que vienes a la cuenta de nuestro presidente a insultarlo eso es de pargela! @Jxxxxxxxxxxxxxas @sanchezcastejon and you learn to respect others that is what you are missing! You come to our president's twitter account to insult him that is stupid!</p>

Fig. 1. Participants' explicit evaluations of impoliteness-related language.

With all this in mind, Culpeper's five super-strategies model (1996), later revised in Culpeper et al. (2003), and his subsequent work on conventionalized politeness formula (Culpeper, 2010) have been taken as a starting point on which to

ground the analysis of impoliteness-related discourse. Other researchers have also used slightly modified versions of Culpeper's model due to its suitability for the study of verbal and written data, i.e., [Lauer \(1996\)](#) on impoliteness in letters of complaint, or [Cashman \(2006\)](#), who applies [Culpeper's \(2005\)](#) model to account for impolite interactions within bilingual English/Spanish children's interaction. However, the resulting taxonomy is mainly data-driven.

A few departures from Culpeper's approach will also be noted. On the one hand, the distinction between on-record and off-record politeness strategies (cf. [Bousfield, 2008](#)) has been maintained, even though, as Bousfield states, bald on-record impoliteness is "a form-based super-strategy which cannot be said to be devoid of face issues". In contrast, positive and negative impoliteness is a function-based super-strategy oriented towards the negative and positive face. For its part, off-record impoliteness includes utterances that can be more or less oriented towards either the positive and/or negative face. However, keeping the distinction may reveal the speaker's choices regarding impoliteness strategies, and it is a distinction that can be operationalized for the quantitative analysis. Accordingly, I will refer to strategies that aim to attack/damage either the positive or negative face of the interlocutor while keeping a distinction between *sarcasm/sarcastic remarks* and *implicated impoliteness* as the implicit/off-record way of conveying impoliteness.⁶

On the other hand, the distinction between positive and negative face has also been kept. However, I consider, alongside [O'Driscoll \(1996\)](#), that the positive/negative distinction should be better seen as a cline. As also pointed out in Bousfield's research (2008), this means that both faces are present in impoliteness-related discourse. Still, one is seen as predominant in a particular situation and, thus, more likely to become the focus of the threat without necessarily excluding the other. In this vein, I view the distinction as useful in line with other researchers who have proposed its reconceptualization rather than its elimination (cf. [O'Driscoll, 1996](#); [Haugh, 2007](#); [Arundale, 2010](#); [Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2010a](#)). Thus, as stated in [Lorenzo-Dus et al. \(2011: 2580\)](#), one aspect of face "may take precedence over the other in interaction, even if both aspects may be simultaneously threatened".

4. Method

4.1. Datasets

The data for the analysis comprise the replies to the original season's greetings tweets posted by the Spanish and British MPs on the microblogging site Twitter on December 23rd and 24th within the context of the sixth COVID-19 wave (see [Fig. 2](#) below). Both countries were about to start the Christmas holidays right after adopting recommendations for citizens to control the new Omicron variant, which was responsible for the 6th wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the European countries fought this wave by adopting various tailored solutions, the Spanish authorities opted for more relaxed measures to curb the spike in cases rather than producing stricter standard guidelines. Thus, the measures included the obligatory return to masks outdoors and a ramping up of the vaccination strategy. For its part, in the UK, whose main line of defense was vaccination and booster doses rather than a lockdown, most rules and regulations had already been eliminated in the summer of 2021 and replaced with advice and guidance on those steps that people could take to minimize risks to themselves and others.

Against this backdrop, both PMs addressed similar themes in their season's greetings, i.e., the presence of the pandemic, the acknowledgment that celebrations would be different, and an appeal to the citizens' sense of responsibility to take care of ourselves and our loved ones.⁷

Considering the high volume of replies that the two OPs received (9.5 k and 4.5 k for PS and BJ, respectively), I limited the corpus of analysis to the first 500 tweet events that directly mentioned PS and BJ with the @ feature to ensure corpora management and comparability. At this initial stage, those tweets that only included emojis or gifs were discarded since even though non-verbal material can be vital in conveying impoliteness, this paper aimed to focus on linguistically expressed impoliteness.

The notion of tweet event was taken from [Giaxoglou \(2017: 24\)](#). It was defined as follows: "[...] the Tweet event includes minimally one tweet followed by direct replies and making up a multi-authored sequence which appears on the text box below each tweet". These replies can be said to work as vocatives in face-to-face interaction ([Vladimirou et al., 2021](#)). With the help of the software Export Comments (www.exportcomments.com), I retrieved all the replies posted until the first week of January 2022 in an excel sheet, as this was when I noticed that the reply activity had almost ceased in both accounts.⁸

Thus, the 500 tweet events surveyed complying with the above requirements amounted to 942 and 973 answers (for the Spanish and English corpus, respectively) organized into several threads. However, considering this paper aimed to look into impoliteness-related discourse, a careful reading of the replies was carried out, and posts that did not include impolite/aggressive-related content were coded as 'agreeable' and not included in the total amount of replies to be later analyzed.

⁶ Withhold politeness has not been considered due to its little relevance in past technologically-mediated communication research dealing with impoliteness (cf. [Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2011](#) for similar insights).

⁷ BJ's message included a video where he addressed the nation to wish them Merry Christmas, whereas Sanchez's just posted a tweet. BJ received 6,352 likes and PS got 6,342. The retweets amounted to 1,457 and 3,237 for BJ and PS, respectively.

⁸ Export Comments allows the retrieval of all the replies posted in response to a specific tweet and provides additional information such as the posters' id together with insights into their activity (retweets, comments received, media inserted, etc.) in an excel sheet format.



Fig. 2. Season's greetings. *Note.* PS's post translates as follows: These days I wish you all enthusiasm, hope and prosperity. We celebrate these days differently, with more precautions due to the pandemic but considering what matters most: the love from our dearest ones. Let's take care of each other. Happy Holidays!

More precisely, 0.98% of the tweets in the Spanish corpus and 1% in the English one complied with the expressive speech act being issued and positively responded to the PM's message wishing back a Merry Christmas/Felices Fiestas or complimenting their policies. Although these tweet events did not compute in the quantitative analysis of impolite triggers, as stated above, they were part of the sample considering their potential for triggering negative replies from participants within the perceptual range of the event (cf. Goffman, 1967), as illustrated in Fig. 3.

In other words, although the tweets by @DXXXZ and @lixxxxxxxxxxxhi above (Fig. 3) did not add up to the total amount of tweet events, the impoliteness-related responses (Reply_01 to Reply_04) they generated were included in the count.

Last but not least, for the presentation of the data, I abode by the latest ethical considerations/guidelines in pragmatics and social media research (Bolander and Locher, 2019; D'Arcy and Young, 2012). As it can be reasonably argued that the online data used here belongs 'in the public domain, and considering that I am not dealing with highly sensitive data, I have not deemed it necessary to obtain valid consent from participants (see Vladimirov et al., 2021 and Teneketzi, 2022 for a similar procedure). Despite this, I have disguised the users' names and nicknames for privacy reasons, except for those of the PMs. All grammatical errors and typos have been kept for the preservation of the original data, and a faithful translation of the Spanish examples has been provided.

4.2. Data analysis procedure

To answer the research questions stated in 3. I adopted a two-pronged approach to assessing impoliteness-related discourse, and quantitative and qualitative methods were employed (Baker et al., 2008) to ensure the triangulation of results. For the quantitative analysis, the approach followed involved the codification of 927 tweets for the Spanish corpus and 967 tweets for the British as conveying impoliteness by pooling strategies into three main categories, which are: *Positive Impoliteness (PosImp)*; *Negative impoliteness (NegImp)*, and *Off-record impoliteness (Off-RImp)*. This was followed by a tabulated quantified presentation of their distribution across corpora.

The coding of the tweets was based mainly on my informed evaluation, drawing on Culpeper's theoretical justifications and the respondents' perceptions (whenever available) of the original posts. However, to ensure reliability, a trained Ph.D. student coded 1/3 of the tweets for each sub-corpus with a reliability rating of 85%. Ambiguous cases were commented on and resolved. Then, the frequency percentages for the different super strategies and sub-strategies were calculated and complemented with several statistical tests (viz., the χ^2 independence test; the one-sample χ^2 test and binomial test; and the

Tweet by @DXXXZ	@sanchezcastejon Muchísimas gracias. Igualmente para ti y toda tu familia. Feliz Navidad. Un fuerte abrazo. @sanchezcastejon Thanks a lot. Same to you and all your family. Happy Christmas. Hugs.	Tweet by @lixXXXXXXXXXXhi	@BorisJohnson And to you and your lovely family Sir 🎄🌍🇺🇸. Good health and Good fortune in 2022
Reply_01	@DXXXZ @sanchezcastejon Diego tranquilo que no te ha felicitado por que no tiene los zapatos sucios, pero tranquilo cámbiate el nombre por Hagmed o Mohamed y tendras una bonita felicitación de su sanchidad en persona. @DXXXZ @sanchezcastejon @DXXXZ @sanchezcastejon Diego calm down, he didn't wish you a Merry Christmas because your shoes are not dirty, but don't panic, change your name to Hagmed or Mohamed and you'll get a nice seasons greeting from your highness in person.	Reply_01	@lixXXXXXXXXXXhi @BorisJohnson Which fookin family he's got about 15 of the little caaants running round
Reply_02	@DXXXZ @sanchezcastejon Anda qué casualidad un militante del Psoe @DXXXZ @sanchezcastejon Look what a coincidence a militant from the Psoe	Reply_02	@lixXXXXXXXXXXhi @BorisJohnson Do you mean the two public kids or the ones he denies?
Reply_03	@DXXXZ @sanchezcastejon Por Dios que verguenza ajena. Límpiase lameculos @DXXXZ @sanchezcastejon For God's sake, what an embarrassment. Clean yourself up, toady	Reply_03	@lixXXXXXXXXXXhi @BorisJohnson Do you need help 🙄
Reply_04	@DXXXZ @sanchezcastejon Qué asco abrazar al sepulturero. @DXXXZ @sanchezcastejon It is so disgusting to embrace the gravedigger	Reply_04	@lixXXXXXXXXXXhi @BorisJohnson Which lovely family? He's got so many b.stard kids.

Fig. 3. Agreeable tweets that generate hostile replies.

Wilcoxon test with Bonferroni correction⁹). These tests were performed to assess whether the frequency distribution of the main super-strategies and the different sub-strategies within the same corpus and/or in comparison with the other corpora was significant from a statistical point of view. The analysis' significance threshold was set at 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$). The triangulation of methods in this study was vital as the qualitative analysis was guided by the observable trends obtained by the quantitative methods. Thus, triangulation boosted the validity and reliability of the research design and the obtained findings (cf. Márquez-Reiter and Placencia, 2005).

Although the tweet was taken as the unit of analysis, some of the replies assessed combined more than one strategy to deploy impolite language, primarily through lexical triggers. In this case, the approach followed was classifying the tweets under each strategy featured. Instances of conventionalized impoliteness formulae posed no problem. For example, the tweet in reply to @BorisJohnson, “Resign!” with the illocutionary force of requesting the PM to do something, was codified under *Block the Other*, an impoliteness strategy primarily geared towards the negative face of the PM. In contrast, the tweet in reply to @sanchezcastejon, “Felices fiestas no, Feliz Navidad, atontato” was codified under two distinct positive impoliteness strategies: the issuing of an utterance that rectified the PM's words: “Felices Fiestas no, Feliz Navidad”, which entailed an attack on his competent face, and the issuing of a direct insult that questioned his intellect with the word “atontato/goofball”. When faced with tweets that could arguably be included under more than one category, as in the Spanish example “vete a tomar por culo/fuck off”, the strategy embodying the overriding purpose of the expression, that is, *Dismissals*, in this case, was chosen over other possibly related strategies, viz., the use of *taboo language* (“culo/butt”).

4.3. The data-driven taxonomy for the analysis of replies

Table 1 below illustrates the resulting data-driven taxonomy for the analysis of the replies to the original posts and includes examples of how the different individual strategies are used in the two corpora. Although most of the strategies were first included in Culpeper (1996), some departures from these taxonomies will be commented on for the purpose of clarification.

One departure from previous studies whose taxonomies are based on Culpeper's (cf. Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2010a; Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2011) involves categorizing the traditionally negative impoliteness strategy *Associate the Other with a Negative Aspect* as a positive face-attacking strategy. This is justified considering that most of the examples analyzed involved

⁹ The Wilcoxon test evaluates whether the distribution of two ordinal variables is similar. This was used to compare the different impoliteness sub-strategies within each corpus. Due to a high number of comparisons (more than 78), the Bonferroni correction was applied to the p-value initially obtained.


criticism geared toward the PMs' *competence face* (Lim and Bowers, 1991: 420), or “the want that one's abilities be respected, which is supported by positive evaluation and recognition and threatened by criticism”.


Likewise, a new category, *Display strong emotions against the hearer*, has been added to existing positive impoliteness strategies. This was done after a preliminary analysis indicated numerous instances of verbally conveyed emotions/feelings toward the PMs as part of the conflict escalation pattern, in which an increase in positive face-attack is correlated with an increase in the intensity of negative emotions. This category agglutinates examples of what Culpeper (2011: 223) terms *affective impoliteness*, which can be defined as “the targeted display of heightened emotion, typically anger, with the implication that the target is to blame for producing that negative emotional state” (cf. Georgakopoulou and Vasilaki, 2018 for similar insights).

Table 1
Data-driven taxonomy of impoliteness strategies.

TAXONOMY OF DATA-DRIVEN IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES

POSITIVE IMPOLITENESS	SPANISH CORPUS	ENGLISH CORPUS
Associate the other with a negative aspect	@sanchezcastejon 🙄🙄🙄 El no desea nada, you que tiene 3 Asesores SOLO, para responder en las Redes Sociales	@BorisJohnson How empty are your words when your HO refused to allow us to return to the UK, no family, no support, remember that when you slurp your wine and eat your turkey. Why not play Santa and allow us to return, reverse the unfair refusal of the EU Family Permit
	@sanchezcastejon 🙄🙄🙄 He doesn't wish a thing, as he has 3 advisors JUST to reply on Social Media	
	@AlXXXXXXXXXX63 @DXXXZ @sanchezcastejon Que soez y mal educado eres, incluso en la navidad. Ya no te digo el resto del año. Que pena! @AlXXXXXXXXXX63 @DXXXZ @sanchezcastejon How rude and ill-mannered you are, even at christmas. Even worse the rest of the year. What a shame!	@BorisJohnson Whilst appreciating you are in a difficult position, a lot of the issues you face are of your own making. Folly after folly, gaf after gaf, advisers who are serving their own agenda and not that of the UK.
Use taboo words	@sanchezcastejon vale pero quita la mascarilla de los huevos	@BorisJohnson BOLLOCKS.
	@sanchezcastejon ok but remove the fucking mask	
	@sanchezcastejon @PSOE Sin paños calientes. <i>Cómeme el nabo</i> . En España se desea FELIZ NAVIDAD @sanchezcastejon @PSOE Right on your face. Eat my dick. In Spain we say HAPPY CHRISTMAS	@BorisJohnson Not reciprocated, you have done more to destroy the tenets of Xmas than any pm since Cromwell... Nice one <i>doofuss</i>
Insult the other	@sxxxxxxxi @sanchezcastejon Menudo racista que solo ayuda a los moros y jode a los españoles. Eso es de ser HDLGP sobornado	@boxxm @BorisJohnson Bloody reptile 🐍
	@sxxxxxxxi @sanchezcastejon Tremendous racist that only helps the moros ¹¹ and fucks the Spaniards. You are a Fucking Bribed Son of a Bitch	
	@sanchezcastejon Se dice Feliz Navidad subnormal @sanchezcastejon We say Happy Christmas you retard!	@BorisJohnson Cheers ya plonker
Dismissals	@sanchezcastejon A tomar por Cul0!!! @sanchezcastejon Go fuck yourself!!!	@BorisJohnson You can shove your good wishes
	@sanchezcastejon Vete a la 🍑 psicopata ;	@BorisJohnson F.O
	@sanchezcastejon Eat 🍑 psycho!	
Display of strong emotions against others	@sxxxxxxxi @sanchezcastejon Que asco de personaje 🤢	@lexxxxxxx7 @BorisJohnson And you point is? No don't respond I don't care
	@sxxxxxxxi @sanchezcastejon What a disgusting character 🤢	
	@elxxxxxxon @sanchezcastejon Que hartura de tipo .Caradura. !!! @elxxxxxxon @sanchezcastejon What a burden! The nerve of him!	@BorisJohnson Have you no shame?! Some of us have a sense of community and doing the right thing without religion or your rhetoric and insincerity. RESIGN
Expressing ill-wishes ¹²	@sanchezcastejon Yo solo deseo que salgas del gobierno y de España. Pd-. si es posible también de la galaxia, gracias.	@BorisJohnson And I would like to see you resign then jailed
	@sanchezcastejon I only wish you would leave the government and Spain. Ps-. if possible also leave the galaxy, thanks.	
Dissociate from the other	@sanchezcastejon Se lo dices a todas esas personas que no tienen ni para comer porque están parados o un trabajo de M***a ,seguro vosotros estaréis comiendo de todo y calentito sin preocuparos el coste de la luz ,nosotros deseamos salud y cambio de gobierno para el próximo año ,y trabajo	@BorisJohnson My family wasn't allowed to wake mum and her funeral was limited to 25 people (more government policies) as your staff did their Kris Kringle at Number Ten? So I hope you can forgive me if I tell you to keep your Xmas good wishes.
	@sanchezcastejon You tell them to all those people who barely make ends meet because they are unemployed or they have a shitty job, you will surely be eating well and will stay warm without worrying about the cost of energy, we wish everybody health and a change of government for next year, and jobs	

<p>Attack the public face of the other (criticisms, reminders)</p>	<p>@sanchezcastejon Qué fiestas? Cada domingo es fiesta. En Pascua es fiesta, el 15 de agosto también, a qué se refiere? @sanchezcastejon What holidays? Each Sunday is a holiday. At Easter we also have holidays, August 15th too..what does he mean?</p>	<p>@kxxxxx10 @BorisJohnson Restful? Get a grip man does no useful work. Photo opportunities aren't work to rest from.</p>
<p>NEGATIVE IMPOLITENESS</p>	<p><i>SPANISH CORPUS</i></p>	<p><i>ENGLISH CORPUS</i></p>
<p>Block the Other (threats, warnings, requests, recommendations, condescend)</p>	<p>@sanchezcastejon quita las mascarillas, último aviso @sanchezcastejon Remove the mask measure, last warning @sanchezcastejon Vete ya! @sanchezcastejon Resign for god's sake! @Axxxxxxxer @sanchezcastejon Por supuesto. Feliz Navidad. Celebra y disfruta con tu familia y amigos el nacimiento de Jesucristo. Yo como soy ateo, lo celebro de otra forma. Respetame como yo te respeto. @Axxxxxxxer @sanchezcastejon Of course. Happy Christmas. Enjoy and celebrate with your family and friends Jesus Christ's birth. Since I am an atheist, I celebrate differently. Respect me as I respect you. @sanchezcastejon Al igual que a la comunidad musulmana felicité el Ramadán, sería un buen detalle si a los cristianos les felicita la Navidad. Le deseo una Feliz Navidad, salud y buen juicio. https://t.co/ONjip1FkIv @sanchezcastejon Just as you wish the muslim community a happy Ramadam, it would be a good token if you would wish the christians a happy Christmas. I wish you a Happy Christmas, health and good judgement.  @sanchezcastejon Repite conmigo:FELIZ NAVIDAD.Ves no es tan difícil, es igual como cuando felicitas el Ramadán, por Dios @sanchezcastejon Repeat with me: HAPPY CHRISTMAS, You see that wasn't that difficult; it's just like when you wish a happy Ramadan, for god's sake</p>	<p>@BorisJohnson Watch for three spirits when the clock strikes twelve. Something has to teach you about hypocrisy. @BorisJohnson Resign! @jxxxxxx1 @BorisJohnson Please could you restore Freedom of Movement to the Millions of United Kingdom citizens that were robbed of it. @BorisJohnson You resigning would be the best Christmas present ever @boxxxm @BorisJohnson He's a dishevelled mess of a man child.Jacket's got stains on it, shirt doesn't look like it's seen an iron, hair not combed. Looks like his nanny dressed him before sending him off to school without a bath.</p>
<p>OFF-RECORD IMPOLITENESS</p>	<p><i>SPANISH CORPUS</i></p>	<p><i>ENGLISH CORPUS</i></p>
<p>Mock endearments /vocatives (ME/V)</p>	<p>@sxxxxxai @sanchezcastejon Eres idiota Susi, idiota @sxxxxxai @sanchezcastejon You are an idiot Susi, an idiot</p>	<p>@jxxxxxx1 @BorisJohnson JENNY DEAR, HE IS NOT GOING TO S**G YOU!</p>
<p>Polite markers of behavior (PM)</p>	<p>@sanchezcastejon Convoca elecciones. Por favor. @sanchezcastejon Call elections. Please. @DXXXZ @sanchezcastejon Diego tranquilo que no te ha felicitado por que no tiene los zapatos sucios, pero tranquilo cámbiate el nombre por Hagmed o Mohamed y tendrás una bonita felicitación de su sanchidad en persona. @DXXXZ @sanchezcastejon Diego just relax, he didn't wish you a Merry Christmas because your shoes are not dirty, but don't panic, change your name to Hagmed or Mohamed and you'll get a nice seasons greeting from your highness in person. @sanchezcastejon @desdelamoncloa Si, súper ilusionada teniendo que mudarme a no sé dónde porque un fondo butre me sube + del 100% el alquiler y, todo esto, a un mes del examen PIR, que también tiene una ratio súper esperanzadora 😊 ¿El precio de alquiler de La Moncloa lo mantienen igual o .. ah, espera</p>	<p>@BorisJohnson Why bother 🙄 just do one please Boris, we don't care @BorisJohnson Lovely #Christmas message. You mention that things are better this year because we can party with our loved ones, but that's exactly what you were doing last year while the rest of us obeyed the rules.</p>

<p>Sarcasm</p>	<p>@sanchezcastejon @desdelamoncloa Yes, I'm so excited about having to move somewhere I don't know because an investment fund is rising my rent by more than 100%, and it's happening in less than a month before I take the PIR exam, with a super encouraging ratio of passing. The rent price for the Moncola is kept the same or...? oh, wait</p>	<p>@BorisJohnson Merry Christmas bozza!</p>
<p>Implicated impoliteness</p>	<p>@pgxxxxx1 @sanchezcastejon Puri...el elfo de Papá Noel te está preparando tu regalo de NOCHEBUENA https://t.co/QVdEiDExhB</p> <p>@pgxxxxx1 @sanchezcastejon Puri, Santa's elf is getting your CHRISTMAS' EVE presents ready https://t.co/QVdEiDExhB</p> 	<p>@BorisJohnson What day and what times the party?</p>
	<p>@suxxxxxi @sanchezcastejon Si un capitán nunca abandona el barco hasta que se unde , ya solo queda la proa ...</p> <p>@suxxxxxi @sanchezcastejon If a captain never leaves the ship till it sinks, there's only the bow left now</p>	<p>@Joxxxxxxxxxxxxx2 @BorisJohnson You been in my drinks cabinet?</p>
	<p>@sanchezcastejon Navidad, se celebra la Navidad, de fiesta es donde están tus neuronas diariamente.</p> <p>@sanchezcastejon Christmas, we celebrate Christmas, at a party is where your neurons are every single day.</p>	<p>@Joxxxxxxxxxxxxx2 @BorisJohnson Sorry about the nasty brain injury you have</p>

As for the negative impoliteness sub-strategies, I have decided to agglutinate different strategies identified in previous models under the all-encompassing umbrella super-strategy *Hinder/Block the Other*, which subsumes speech acts such as *warnings* and *threats to the Other*, the use of *condescension*, together with *recommendations* or *pieces of advice* and *requests* to carry a specific action. These requests, or command imperatives, qualify as examples of on-record impoliteness towards the negative face of the other by imposing harm on the PMs or other participants and forcing behavioral compliance on their part.

Finally, off-record impoliteness embodies those cases of impoliteness being conveyed via an implicature or *implicated impoliteness* (cf. [Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2010b](#)) and *sarcasm* or *mock politeness* (i.e., cases of insincere politeness or surface realizations). I have also included under the *off-record strategies* the use of *mock polite vocatives*, which are further divided into *vocatives of mock endearment* (“Pedro, Susi, mate”) and *mock deference* (“Sir, Don”) in line with the work of [Georgakopoulou and Vasilaki \(2018\)](#) and [Vasilaki \(2020\)](#). The relevance of these categories lies in the context in which they are employed, namely, that of public online political debate in which genuine endearment towards the politician is not justified, and the deployment of deference terms (titles or honorifics) is discouraged due to the informality that the social media brings with it (¹⁰¹¹).

5. Analysis and discussion

In this chapter, the results from the quantitative analysis will be presented, and the most statistically significant strategies identified for each of the corpora will be qualitatively explored in further subsections for each PM.

5.1. Results from the quantitative analysis

From the 500 tweet events collected, 98.4% (n = 927) and 99.4% (n = 967) of the replies to the Spanish and British PMs (respectively) deployed impoliteness-related language by issuing varying hostile speech acts to show disagreement or non-compliance with the OP in the two sub-corpora under analysis.

After codification, 2,517 strategies were obtained: 1,517 correspond to the Spanish corpus and 1,000 to the English one (cf. [Table 2](#)). Respondents adopt a critical stance achieved through *PosImp* strategies, as the most pervasively enacted type, followed by *Off-RImp* resources and *NegImp* strategies. On-record strategies are preferred in comparison to off-record ones in both corpora.

¹⁰ “Moros” (from Latin *maurus*) is currently used as a pejorative form to refer to migrants from sub-Saharan Africa. It was used in Roman times to refer to North African inhabitants (Mauretanea).

¹¹ For the purpose of this article, ill-wishes necessarily include some explicit illocutionary force indicating device, i.e., “Te deseo/I wish/I would like” followed by some negative content unlike what happens in [Culpeper’s \(2011\)](#) ill-wishes and curses category.

Table 2

N° of original replies and n° of final replies per corpora.

	N° of original replies	N° of final replies	N° of imp. Strategies codified
500 Spanish tweet-events	942	927	1,517 (0.6 per reply)
500 English tweet-events	973	967	1,000 (1.03 per reply)

Results from the chi-square independence test (cf. Table 3), which compares the distribution frequency of each super-strategy in the two corpora, show that *NegImp* ($p = 0.001$, 7.5% vs. 11.4%) and *Off-RImp* ($p < 0.001$, 20.7% vs. 27.2%) occurred with a higher frequency, from a statistical point of view, in the English corpus. In contrast, *PImp* strategies are more frequently deployed by respondents in the Spanish corpus ($p < 0.001$; 71.8% vs. 61.4%). This reflects a stark contrast in the respondents' preferences for codifying their disagreement through impolite, face-attacking/aggravating language.

Table 3

Frequency distribution of Imp strategies and p.values.

	N° strategies		PS' corpus		BJ's corpus		p-value
		%	N	%	N	%	
Total	2517	100.0	1517	100.0	1000	100.0	
(On record) NegImp	228	9.1	114	7.5	114	11.4	0.001**
(On-record) PostImp	1703	67.7	1089	71.8	614	61.4	<0.001***
Off-RImp	586	23.3	314	20.7	272	27.2	<0.001***

A closer look at the frequency distribution of the sub-strategies in the two corpora (cf. Table 4) shows that the *NegImp* strategy *Hinder/Block the Other* (7.5% vs. 11.4%, $p. 0.001$ **) occurs with a statistically significant higher frequency in the British corpus compared to the Spanish one. Amongst the *PosImp* strategies, two categories, viz., *Insult the Other* (25% vs. 6.8% $p. <0.001$ **) and *Attack the Public Face of the Other* (16% vs. 3.8%, $p. <0.001$ **), display a frequency that is statistically significant in the Spanish corpus in comparison with those deployed in the British corpus. In contrast, in the British corpus, the categories of *Associate the Other with a Negative Aspect* (14% vs. 33.3% $p. <0.001$ **), *Dismissals* (3.1% vs. 1.7%, $p. 0.022$ *), and *Express ill-wishes* (5.7% vs. 3.7%, $p. 0.017$ *) are the most frequent strategies deployed to attack the PM and others' positive face. Thus, although the British respondents seem to orient themselves less towards attacking the positive face of their interlocutor in their replies to the OP than their Spanish counterparts, when they do, they carry out these aggravating acts through these sub-strategies. In contrast, the categories of *Implicated Imp* (1.6% vs. 0.7%, $p. 0.037$ *) and *Mock Politeness* (21.6% vs. 15%, $p. <0.001$ **) are more frequently deployed in the British corpus, and their frequency is statistically significant as indicated by the p-value when compared to the Spanish corpus. This means that there is a tendency to less overt forms of impoliteness through mock politeness and, to a lesser extent, through implicature. The rest of the sub-strategies are used in both corpora in similar percentages, and no statistical difference has been noted.

Table 4

Frequency distribution of sub-strategies and p.value.

	Spanish corpus %	English corpus %	p-value
NEGATIVE IMPOLITENESS			
Hinder/Block the other	7.5	11.4	0.001**
POSITIVE IMPOLITENESS			
Associate the other with something negative	11.4	33.3	<0.001***
Taboo words	1.7	1.1	0.210
Insults	25	6.8	<0.001***
Dismissals	1.7	3.1	0.022*
Display of strong emotions against the other	3.2	3	0.746
Ill-wishes	3.7	5.7	0.017*
Dissociate from the other	6.4	4.6	0.057
Attack the other's public image	16	3.8	<0.001***
OFF-RECORD IMPOLITENESS			
Mock endearment/deference vocatives	3.8	2.7	0.127
Polite markers	1.1	1.3	0.685
Mock Politeness	15	21.6	<0.001***
Implicated Impoliteness	0.7	1.6	0.037*

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

5.2. Results from the qualitative analysis


The most frequently deployed sub-strategies of impoliteness-related discourse in reply to what respondents perceive to be inappropriate, morally wrong, or offensive will be qualitatively assessed for each PM as patterns most favored by one cultural group compared with the other.

5.2.1. @BorisJohnson A man of moral integrity

The impoliteness-related language in response to Boris' OP seems to be occasioned by what the respondents feel is a blatant violation of their moral expectancies regarding several of the foundation blocks of morality, as identified in Haidt and Joseph (2004), such as *harm/care* (i.e., concerns for others), *fairness* (justice and rights and concerns about unfair treatment), and *authority* (concerns related to obligations and duties). Within this context, the replies disparage, criticize and attack the British PM for (i) his management of the COVID pandemic (virus-related UK deaths, lockdowns, and his policy on vaccination and booster jabs), (ii) the way he conducted himself in the light of breaches of Covid regulations for the alleged lockdown parties in Downing Street,¹² which concern his duties and obligations; and (iii) for personal aspects dealing with his physical appearance, more specifically, regarding his hair and choice of clothing.

The respondents' disagreement with BJ's post and disparagement towards his persona is best enacted through the combination of on-record and off-record impoliteness strategies. More specifically, attacks toward the PM's negative face are primarily enacted through the super-strategies *Hinder/Block the Other*, along with the positive impoliteness strategy *Associate the Other with a Negative Aspect*, mainly deployed through harsh criticism and the association of the PM with some negative aspect/behavior alongside the issuing of *Dismissals* and *Express Ill-wishes*.

Hinder/Block the Other is mainly deployed through speech-acts like threats¹³ or warnings (ex. 1 & 2), whose perlocutionary effect is that of intimidating the PM; requests (to restore freedom of movement as in ex. 3), and orders (bare imperatives asking BJ, to tell the truth, do his job as in ex. 4–6) and even recommendations and pieces of advice on what course of action to take (ex. 7 and 8). These speech acts are examples of coercive impoliteness or "impoliteness that seeks a realignment of values between the producer and the target such that the producer benefits or has their current benefits reinforced or protected" (Culpeper, 2011: 252). More specifically, this super-strategy's coercive nature has as its ultimate aim forcing some behavioral compliance. Thus, what examples 1–8 illustrate seems to be a desire on the part of the participants to obtain redress for the grievances that BJ and his policies during the pandemic have imposed on them, i.e., fear, and crimes against humanity, the freedom of movement for citizens, and the rebalancing of the moral order calls for his resignation, as he has failed the population, has lied to them, and is insincere, among other things.

Ex. 1	@BorisJohnson Your game is up Boris; we're coming for "everyone" involved in this #Plandemic #Scamdemic. All of the players promoting and upholding the #CovidBioweapon tactics will be held personally responsible for the fearmongering and crimes against humanity.
Ex. 2	@BorisJohnson Tick-tock Boris, tick-tock. Your time is running out.....
Ex. 3	@jen_bob1 @BorisJohnson Please could you restore Freedom of Movement to the Millions of United Kingdom citizens that were robbed of it.
Ex. 4	@BorisJohnson Your failing us boris.. you need to step up or your time is on borrowed time.. your backbenchers are telling you that... tell the truth and do your job that we voted you in for .. or else https://t.co/l6J63lYQEc 
Ex. 5	@BorisJohnson Have you no shame?! Some of us have a sense of community and doing the right thing without religion or your rhetoric and insincerity. RESIGN
Ex. 6	@BorisJohnson Put the pipe down mate.
Ex. 7	@BorisJohnson The best Christmas present you can give the nation is to resign immediately, if not then try being a true Conservative and stop lying about everything, stop listening to Imperial college, and finally, abolish the BBC tax, licence fee.
Ex. 8	@jen_bob1 @BorisJohnson People have resigned over less , so he definitely should.

¹² The parties were 'alleged' when the corpus was compiled, but trust in him was undermined when I finished writing the paper to the point that he announced his resignation.

¹³ Threats in my corpus are non-conditional, and sometimes represent an action that constitutes a threat, as the 'tick-tock, tick-tock' indicating that BJ's time is running out.

Sometimes these directives are combined with *Mock Ederaments/Vocatives* (first names, i.e., *Boris*) or generic terms of familiarity (*mate*) as strategies that add an offensive effect considering that their use is not expected in interactions of this sort and thus are to be taken as insincere. Moreover, the offense also lies in the fact that by asking the politician to follow some course of action in an imposing manner, the posters present themselves as self-appointed connoisseurs or experts in the political issues dealt with. In other words, they issue these directives in an attempt to force compliance so that a realignment of those aspects of the moral order that have been breached takes place while simultaneously demeaning the PM's freedom of action and adopting a condescending tone with him:

Associate the Other with a Negative Aspect is the most preferred and frequently deployed *Plmp* strategy in the British corpus and is enacted by criticizing the PM's honesty and integrity as a leader or by mentioning something negative about his policies. These strategies can also have a coercive function as they aim to harm the PMs' social identity. Thus, ex. 9 presupposes something is wrong with the PM, as he has been spreading the mistaken belief that vaccination will prevent the population from infecting others. At the same time, BJ is also asked to stop lying, with the presupposition that he's been previously lying. Likewise, ex. 10 dwells on his lack of responsibility as PM by enumerating the actions he has taken that constituted a breach of the moral order and which defied what he was expected to do, viz., to abide by the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic in the same way that the citizens were supposed to follow them. This idea is reinforced by ex. 11, which focuses on his not missing out on a thing last Christmas and questioning his moral behavior during the lockdown while trying to "claw back the moral authority" he lacked. In the same vein, ex. 12 criticizes BJ for bringing up political issues when wishing a Happy Christmas. The respondent then embarks on a personal emotional narrative about how some loved ones will not be present this Christmas to end her intervention by angrily dismissing both JB's platitudes and vaccines ('shove them'). This strategy aids in the polarization between those in the out-group and the PM's supporters as it aims to smear and damage his competence face (Lim and Bowers, 1991). This is achieved by acknowledging similarities between the Nazis in the 30s and the Tory government in a categorical way. In a similar vein, his lack of competence and willingness to work is shown through humor (Hahahaha!!!), while negatively focusing on his ability to 'produce' kids (ex. 13 & 14, respectively) and justifying his criticism by adding that even his children would not want to have a thing to do with him:

Ex. 9	@BorisJohnson What is wrong with him telling People that the Jab will stop Oeople infecting others. It's simply not true why don't you stop lying to us Boris!!!! 😏
Ex. 10	@BorisJohnson Don't be there trying to take responsibility for people having a better Christmas... your issue is you don't take responsibility!!... dithering on restrictions, denying Downing St parties, claiming ignorance on flat renovations...!!
Ex. 11	@BorisJohnson If I remember correctly, you and your pals didn't 'miss out' on anything last year. Everyone else did. While your mates and advisors joked about it and then lied about it. Yet here you are standing in front of a Christmas tree trying to claw back the moral authority you
Ex. 12	@BorisJohnson Christmas isn't about covid so why bring your politics into it? This Christmas is sadder for my family because my Mum is not with us anymore and due to your policies I didn't see her on what turned out to be her last Xmas last year. So take your platitudes and vaccines and shove em
Ex. 13	@Bxxxxxxxxxxx3 @BorisJohnson There are indeed similarities between the Nazis of the 1930,s and the current Tory government.
Ex. 14	@Jxxxxxxxxxxxxx2 @BorisJohnson Hahahaha!! He wouldn't know hard work if it hit his bum!! The only thing he's good at is producing kids. Oh and a lot of them want nothing to do with him!!
Ex. 15	@jxxxxxx1 @BorisJohnson You have extremely low standards!
Ex. 16	@lxxxxxxxxxxxxxi @BorisJohnson He is responsible for the deaths of thousands of people and you sit there fawning over him? Do you have any empathy or integrity?

However, criticism can also be targeted toward those in the in-group in response to their support for the PM, as shown in ex. 15 above, in which @jxxxxxx1 is explicitly rebuked and criticized with an explicit 'You' for his low standards for standing up for Boris and the mistakes he's made, whereas in the polylogal sequence in ex. 16 @lxxxxxxxxxxxxxi's integrity, empathy, and support for BJ are questioned by bringing to the fore the PM's responsibility for the COVID casualties and the lack of integrity on the part of the respondent.

The strategy *Associate the Other with a Negative Aspect* is also rife in the British corpus, especially in *ad hominem fallacies*. These uses embody a shift from the public domain in which the PM has a public face to maintain as a politician and move towards the more emotional terrain by putting the onus on individual traits. In the tweet below (see Fig. 4), @bxxxxm asks a question and wonders whether BJ is either drunk or suffering from a hangover after throwing a party before tweeting the season's greeting. The question, which in itself indirectly attacks the PM by attributing him either one of two undesirable traits in a politician, triggers a thread in which impoliteness-related language escalates with up to 31 replies. In these replies, BJ is variously ridiculed for his low standards of integrity or moral conduct (*throwing cheese and wine fests, partying*), but also for his physical appearance and standards of cleanliness regarding his hair (*brushed with a Toffee Apple, or styled by Wurzel Gummidge, not combed*), and clothes (*shirt with stains on and not ironed*), to the point, that he is ridiculed and belittled and his behavior equated to that of an irresponsible child. The exchange in Fig. 4 illustrates the echo chamber dynamics in which conflictual agreement occurs when faced with a reply that fits in with previously held beliefs. The impoliteness in this type of exchanges fulfills a positive and group-enhancing function as participants collaborate in the “playful” or “entertaining” attack against a public figure.


Tweet by @bxxxxm	 @BorisJohnson Pissed or hungover? https://t.co/mkaEENq5jb
Reply_01	@bxxxxm @BorisJohnson Partying 🍷
Reply_02	@bxxxxm @BorisJohnson Coked up
Reply_03	@bxxxxm @BorisJohnson Brushed his hair with a Toffee Apple
Reply_04	@bxxxxm @BorisJohnson Styled by Wurzel Gummidge!?
Reply_05	@bxxxxm @BorisJohnson Cheese and wine fest
Reply_06	@bxxxxm @BorisJohnson I thought he had smartened himself up
Reply_07	@bxxxxm @BorisJohnson Well, it was a heavy party.
Reply_08	@bxxxxm @BorisJohnson Jesus, it looks like a bird made him out of bits it found at a farm
Reply_09	@bxxxxm @BorisJohnson He's a dishevelled mess of a man child. Jacket's got stains on it, shirt doesn't look like it's seen an iron, hair not combed. Looks like his nanny dressed him before sending him off to school without a bath.
Reply_10	@bxxxxm @BorisJohnson Bloody reptile 🐍
Reply_11	@bxxxxm @BorisJohnson Rolled out of bed in the suit he laid down in the night before.
Reply_12	@bxxxxm @BorisJohnson Must have been recorded after the wine and cheese party.

Fig. 4. Escalation of impoliteness-related language in a thread.

The other two preferred *PIMP* strategies by the English respondents are *Express ill-wishes* and *Dismissals*. For the PM, *expressing ill-wishes* is the most explicit expression of the respondents' dislike or some negative emotion. Thus, in example 18, embarrassment seems to be the feeling triggering her ill-wish. Sometimes, the ill-wish is used with adjectives that indicate how respondents feel towards the PM (ex. 19) (*miserable, humiliating, hopeful*). *Expressing ill-wishes* conveys an intentional desire that the PM suffers some harm or misfortune, be it his resignation (ex. 17), expulsion from the government, or getting a new face transplant, which implicitly conveys an attack on his appearance (ex. 20) in what seems to be an outburst of disgust towards him:

Ex. 17	@BorisJohnson Merry Christmas Boris, let's hope Santa brings you a nice new pen so that you can write your resignation letter
Ex. 18	@BorisJohnson I wish you'd resign. It's embarrassing.
Ex. 19	@txxxxxxxxxy @BorisJohnson Hope he brings you a face transplant
Ex. 20	@BorisJohnson And I'd like to wish you a miserable festive season, a humiliating expulsion from government and an extended period in prison. I've asked Santa and left mince pies and sherry so I'm hopeful.
Ex. 21	@BorisJohnson Please go away!
Ex. 22	@BorisJohnson Piss off boris!!!
Ex. 23	@BorisJohnson @MxxxxxxxxxxL F**k Johnson. Drink El Santo https://t.co/Qr1pha20kn 
Ex. 24	@BorisJohnson Stuff your merry Christmas. How was the party? At least you had the decency this time round to not do it illegally

Likewise, *Dismissals* are also intentional attacks on the PM's positive face by expressing strong disagreement with the OP and conveying an utter detachment and deprecation for the person in question. Although sometimes the dismissals do not seem to be instigated by an obvious trigger (ex 21–23), on other occasions, they are best seen as resulting from the respondents harboring some negative emotions towards the PM and their desire to redress a grievance. For example, BJ's lack of decency seems to be the cause for the previous dismissal of "Stuff your Christmas" in ex 23, as aided by the sarcastic question 'How was the party', which is to be taken as mock politeness by implicitly activating on the other participants the unorthodox behavior of the PM.

On its part, *Implicated Imp* and *Sarcasm* are also recurrent sub-strategies statistically more frequently deployed in the British corpus than in the Spanish one (21.6% vs. 15%; p.). In ex. 25, the respondent issues an expressive that should be best taken as a sarcastic remark considering that she is deeply affected by the loss of one relative, and thus, the wish is not to be taken as sincere. In ex 26, the speaker is sarcastic when he says that BJ leads by example, enumerating several actions that attack his face as a leader and ridicule him via flouting the maxim of Quality. Other replies seem to imply, with a tongue-in-cheek attitude, that BJ must have been drinking or must have suffered some brain injury; hence conveying the idea that otherwise, it would be hard to justify his words. Likewise, in ex 28, the wish invites the audience to recover the implicature that BJ pays little attention to his hygiene. These replies implicitly invite the inference of highly offensive implicatures regarding his physical behavior and suitability as a leader:

Ex. 25	@BorisJohnson I regret to inform you that the lady in the photo will not be voting Conservative. This was featured in @ShropshireStar 50yrs today. She kept the original and the negatives. How special that I came by it yesterday. So from my family to yours (with one missing) Merry Christmas.
Ex. 26	@jxxxxx1 @BorisJohnson I think he's gr8 also. He leads by example. Garden parties during lock down, cheese and wine parties (sorry meetings) when the rest of us are losing loved ones. 120,000 daily infections, almost 25% of the adults unvaccinated. Yes he's doing a brilliant job
Ex. 27	@Jxxxxxxxxxx2 @BorisJohnson Sorry about the nasty brain injury you have
Ex. 28	@BorisJohnson Hope Santa's bringing you a hairbrush this year.
Ex. 29	@Bxxxxxxxxxx3 @BorisJohnson What ever you are drinking, I'll take two.

5.2.2. @sanchezcastejon ¡Feliz Navidad, Pedro! ¡Feliz NAVIDAD!

The impoliteness-related language in the replies to PS's OP opens a moral window into what participants perceive as a breach of their moral expectancies, mainly regarding the foundation blocks of *in-group solidarity/loyalty* and *fairness/reciprocity* (Haidt and Joseph, 2004). In the case of the Spanish PM, the chain of hostile acts in response to his tweet mostly put the onus on (i) the choice of seasonal greeting (“Felices Fiestas” vs. “Feliz Navidad”, a greeting tainted with religious tones for the Christian community); (ii) the use of the gender-inclusive form “todos y todas” vs. the generic masculine form; (iii) or the management of the COVID-19 pandemic and other topics of relevance within the Spanish political scenario.

Disparagement of Sánchez's moral conduct is mainly achieved through a combination of attacks on the positive face of the PM (both public and personal) with the use of insults, alongside criticisms and reminders, and speech acts that correct or rectify what he has said or done. The respondents deploy *Insult the Other*, either with the formula “X!”, which looks like a summon and explicitly claims that the person belongs to a category of entities, or with the procedure “you are an X” (cf. Fuentes and Brenes, 2022: 66). One important finding is that insults or personalized negative vocatives in the Spanish corpus are commonly found in initial positions and are uninstigated; that is, they occur in response to no apparent linguistic trigger (see Vasilaki, 2020 for similar findings). This indicates that impoliteness seems to be deployed regardless of the post's content; thus, the competitive climate that characterizes the interaction reflects the negative emotional relationship between the PM and the respondents as one possibly triggered by dislike while also being aided by the social media affordances (social anonymity, disinhibition), together with other offline parameters such as the perceived breach in the moral order of political affairs.

According to Haverkate (1993), insults are inherently impolite expressive speech acts that aim to overtly damage, attack, and deteriorate the social image of the receiver of the insult. Thus, they negatively evaluate the interlocutor and express non-compliance with what s/he has said. The Spanish respondents resort to conventionalized insults and sometimes accompany them with capitalization to emphasize and index their emotional stance. This is the case of the insults issued against PS, which reflect a solid emotional and psychological negative load on the part of the respondent, as is the case with the appellative forms in ex. 30–32, which revolve around some of the themes of name-calling identified in previous research (cf. Allan and Burridge, 1991; Demjén and Hardaker, 2016; Darma et al., 2017): *personal traits* such as dishonesty (“sinvergüenza, golfo, felón”), *animals* (“perro”), *family and illegitimacy* (HDLGP¹⁴) and *intellect* (INUTIL, psicópata):

Ex. 30	@sanchezcastejon Sinvergüenza. Golfo @sanchezcastejon Scoundrel. Rascal
Ex. 31	@sanchezcastejon HDLGP 🤡 @sanchezcastejon SON OF A FUCKING BITCH 🤡
Ex. 32	@sanchezcastejon INUTIL @sanchezcastejon USELESS
Ex. 33	@sanchezcastejon Perro Sánchez. Felón. @sanchezcastejon Dog Sánchez. Traitor
Ex. 34	@sanchezcastejon El psicópata no es capaz de decir feliz navidad @sanchezcastejon The psychopath is unable to say happy christmas.

Insults, which are thus key in delegitimizing the PMs, are usually used with the strategy *Attack the Public Face of the Other*. This strategy is enacted by reminding PS of what he should have said or done to restore the moral order while correcting and questioning the suitability of his words to expose his inconsistencies. Correcting the PM is one of the most frequently deployed impoliteness strategies. More precisely, some of the corrections focus on linguistic correctness and seem to fulfill a similar function to that of the strategy (hyper)criticism identified by Hardaker (2013). In her study on trolling, the (alleged) troller would ignore the content of a post while focusing on its grammar, spelling, or punctuation to criticize others excessively. In the corpus, this strategy is carried out with the help of capitalization, the expression of strong emotions on the part of the speaker, and insults, as in ex 35, where the escalation into an interpersonal conflict is clear:

¹⁴ This stands for “Hijo de la Gran Puta” (Son of a fucking bitch).

Ex. 35	<p>@sanchezcastejon FELIZ NAVIDAD Y NO FELICES FIESTAS PSICÓPATA DESGRACIADO, si es saca lo peor de mí HDLGP.</p> <p>@sanchezcastejon HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND NOT HAPPY HOLIDAYS FUCKING PSYCHOPATH, he just brings out the worst in me. SON OF A FUCKING BITCH.</p>
Ex. 36	<p>@sanchezcastejon Feliz navidad que te costaba decirlo</p> <p>@sanchezcastejon Happy christmas, it seems you were reluctant to say it</p>
Ex. 37	<p>@sanchezcastejon no tienes problema en twittear “feliz ramadán”o“feliz hanukkah”, pero eres incapaz de felicitar LA NAVIDAD. Parece que te cuesta. Nunca dices felices fiestas en las demás ocasiones. No sabemos de que fiestas hablas. ¿De disfraces? Sé coherente y di feliz Navidad.</p> <p>@sanchezcastejon you have no problem tweeting “happy ramadan” or “happy hanukkah”, but you are incapable of wishing us a happy CHRISTMAS. It seems that you’re reluctant to say it. You never say happy holidays on other occasions. We don’t know what holidays you are talking about. Carnival holidays? Be coherent and say happy Christmas.</p>
Ex. 38	<p>@Fxxxxxxxxxxxxr @sanchezcastejon Todavía nos quedan casi dos años por aguantar a este desgraciado de Sánchez. Pedrito, no es felices fiestas y si FELIZ NAVIDAD, pero Te voy a felicitar con un villancico https://t.co/zbeektGDtq</p> <p>@Fxxxxxxxxxxxxr @sanchezcastejon We still have two more years ahead of us to put up with this scoundrel. Peter, it is not happy holidays, it is HAPPY CHRISTMAS, but I am going to wish them to you with a carrol https://t.co/zbeektGDtq</p>
Ex. 39	<p>@sanchezcastejon Fiestas? Las fiestas son en verano, en el pueblo.Se dice Feliz Navidad. PorroSanxe</p> <p>@sanchezcastejon Holidays? We have holidays in summer, in our villages. We say Happy Christmas. PorroSanxe (Pothead Sanchez)</p>
Ex. 40	<p>@sanchezcastejon En estos días?? Cuales , de fin de semana, de solsticio de invierno, de obligación de llevar la mascarilla por mis huevos morenos?Acomplejado, como todo el discurso progre, felicita la Navidad coño, que no cuesta nada, zoquete</p> <p>@sanchezcastejon These days? Which ones?, weekend days, winter solstice days, those days when we have to wear the mask because I fucking well feel like it? You are so full of complexes, as all the lefty discourse, say Happy Christmas for fuck’s sake, it’s no biggie, duffer.</p>
Ex. 41	<p>@sanchezcastejon Se dice a TODOS. Eres el presidente de un país y no sabes ni hablar. Mentir en cambio, se te da de maravilla. Mentiroso!</p> <p>@sanchezcastejon We say a TODOS. You are the president of a country and you don’t know how to talk properly. You’re good at lying, though. Liar!</p>
Ex. 42	<p>@sanchezcastejon Y a todes?</p> <p>@sanchezcastejon What about ‘a todes’?</p>

Sometimes there is an association between PS and some negative aspects; for example, in ex. 36-7, the PM is presented as showing an unwillingness or reluctance (‘te costaba decirlo’/‘you were reluctant to say it’) to tweet what the out-group considers the correct season’s greetings (‘Feliz Navidad’). At the same time, he is reminded of having no problem greeting other religious festivities such as the Ramadán. This has a direct influence on his image by portraying him as an unfair PM that somehow denies the Spanish identity, an aspect that the out-group aims to emphasize with the inclusion of deindividuation markers (‘eres, te cuesta’/‘you are, you’re reluctant to say it vs. ‘sabemos/we know, or the ‘you’ vs. ‘us’ dichotomy). Likewise, questioning his choice of the word “fiestas” or “estos días/these days” to refer to the holidays adds to the shaming of his competence face. It ridicules him for having chosen a term that is inadequate and ambiguous (ex 39–40) in the view of those in the out-group. Thus, some of the respondents mockingly wish him “Feliz Navidad”, as a way of correcting him by indicating that “fiestas” is a word used to refer to summer holidays in Spanish villages (“las fiestas del pueblo”) or by mockingly asking whether he is referring to “fiestas de disfraces”.

By deploying all these impoliteness strategies, participants aim “to build the status of the informed, conscious, networked citizen” (Georgakopoulou and Vasilaki, 2018: 234) while somehow challenging the status quo of the politician. In ex 40, the impoliteness-related language deployed escalates with the aid of *Use Taboo Words* (“por mis huevos morenos, coño/“because I

fucking well feel like it”), which is not only an expression of the speaker’s emotional state but also an expression of anger towards the PM; and *Insult the Other* (“zoquete”/“duffer”) as mechanisms that aid emotional arousal and promote interpersonal attacks.

Attacks are also aimed at the PM’s choice of the gender-inclusive formula “todos y todas” in the seasonal greeting, to the extent that some participants correct his words by reminding him that “todos” (we all) is the correct default form,¹⁵ while also associating the PM with a negative aspect, viz., his lack of communicative abilities (ex. 41-2). The attacks on the use of a more gender-inclusive formula reveal the opposition to the underlying Spanish socio-cultural gendered discourses and the discourses that surround political correctness and which determine the formula’s choice.

Likewise, respondents sarcastically reproach the PM for not using the grammatically-neutral form “todes” as in ex. 42 “¿y a todes¹⁶?” to attack the positive face of the whole coalition government considering that the Minister of Equality, Irene Montero, from the group Unidas Podemos, is a staunch defender of this form.

The examples above seem to indicate that the wrong choice of season’s greeting or gender-inclusive formula is enough to legitimize networked participants to engage in authority forms of talk through impoliteness-related discourse; hence reasserting the moral order in political affairs (cf. Georgakopoulou and Vasilaki, 2018 for similar insights).

Aggressive and impolite replies triggered by strong emotions tend to elicit supportive reactions from the out-group, as in the exchange in Fig. 5, thus corroborating that impoliteness-related discourse is instrumental and serves group-enhancing functions. After responding to the PM with a combination of capitalization and the insult “psicópata desgraciado/fucking psychopath”, the respondent below (see Fig. 5) justifies his outburst with an explicit manifestation of repulsion for the PM through a metapragmatic comment (“si es que saca lo peor de mí”/“he just brings out the worst in me”) which serves as an index of his emotions. Further replies in the thread show empathy with this comment (“te comprendo perfectamente” or “me pasa lo mismo”, “I know how you feel, I feel the same”), thus pointing to their animadversion as the source of the aggression while putting the onus on the PM’s behavior. One of the participants


Tweet by @AxxxxxR	@sanchezcastejon FELIZ NAVIDAD Y NO FELICES FIESTAS PSICÓPATA DESGRACIADO, si es saca lo peor de mí HDLGP @sanchezcastejon HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND NOT HAPPY HOLIDAYS, FUCKING PSYCHOPATH he just brings out the worst in me. SON OF A FUCKING BITCH
Reply_01 Sxxxxxxxxxxa	@ AxxxxxR @sanchezcastejon Me pasa lo mismo... 🤢🤢🤢🤢🤢🤢🤢 @AxxxxxR @sanchezcastejon Same here... 🤢🤢🤢🤢🤢🤢
Reply_02 mxxxxxxxx3	@ AxxxxxR @Sxxxxxxxxxxa @sanchezcastejon Jajaja te comprendo perfectamente. @AxxxxxR @Sxxxxxxxxxxa @sanchezcastejon I totally understand you
Reply_03 axxxxxxxxx2	@ AxxxxxR @sanchezcastejon Jajajaaa @AxxxxxR @sanchezcastejon Hahaha
Reply_04 Rxxxxxxxx4	@ AxxxxxR @Sxxxxxxxxxxa @sanchezcastejon Asco se queda corto https://t.co/8ZWGz5yems @AxxxxxR @Sxxxxxxxxxxa @sanchezcastejon Disgusted is not even close to how I feel 
Reply_05 axxxxxxxxx1	@ AxxxxxR @sanchezcastejon Está enfermo! @AxxxxxR @sanchezcastejon He’s sick!
Reply_06 cxxxxxxxxxs	@ AxxxxxR @sanchezcastejon Me río porque nos sale la misma bilis... 🤢🤢🤢 @AxxxxxR @sanchezcastejon I’m laughing out loud because he makes me as mad as you... 🤢🤢🤢
Reply_07 AxxxxxR	@Sxxxxxxxxxxa @sanchezcastejon Es un asco tan profundo el que me provoca y una mala leche cada vez que le veo 🤢🤢🤢 @Sxxxxxxxxxxa @sanchezcastejon Seeing him is so disgusting and revolting 🤢🤢🤢

Fig. 5. Display of emotional escalation toward the PM.

¹⁵ “Todos” is the so-called ‘false generic’ form, and is especially used in mixed-gender groups, or in groups where the gender balance is unknown.

¹⁶ This form has been recently suggested as the third, grammatically-neutral gender form by gender-nonconforming, nonbinary and transgender individuals in an attempt to adapt grammatically-gendered languages (i.e. Spanish, Portuguese, French) to those people outside the male-female gender binary. However, the Real Academia de la Lengua Española has not accepted its use. This form differs from “todos” and “todas”, which refer to the masculine and feminine linguistic genders through the gender marker -o and -a, respectively.

indicates that repulsion is the best he can come up with to describe PS (“asco se queda corto”/“disgusted is not even close to how I feel”) and posts a picture in which we can read “VETEATOMARPORCULO HIJO DE LA GRAN PUTA-DICTADOR-TERRORISTA-GENOCIDA-COMUNISTA” (Go fuck yourself-son of a bitch-dictator-terrorist-genocidal communist). This escalation of aggression and the expression of emotional communication becomes a source of contagion for other respondents and seems to be instrumental as an out-group strategy and is typical of the echo-chamber dynamics already mentioned. This is evident if we consider that the rest of the replies comply with AxxxxxR and try to convey certain rapport with the other users through the use of emojis, as PS provokes the same visceral and angry reaction (“nos sale la misma bilis”, “he makes me as mad as you”) in all of them.

5. Conclusion

This paper has explored impoliteness-related discourse enacted in response to the season's greetings posted by the Spanish and British PMs on December 2021, wishing the population “Felices Fiestas/Merry Christmas” on the microblogging site Twitter. Thus, a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the first 500 tweet events targeted at @sanchezcastejon and @BorisJohnson and the replies that ensued was carried out within an *impoliteness*₂ approach. Culpeper's work on impoliteness (1996, 2010, 2011) was a starting point for the elaboration of my data-driven taxonomy.

The underlying motivation of the study was to identify the impoliteness strategies deployed to express disagreement with the OP (research question #1); to determine if there were similarities and differences in the super and sub-strategies frequency of use (research question #2), and to delve into the nature of the moral issues that seemed to trigger the impoliteness (research question #3). In this section, I bring together several interrelated discoveries regarding the nature of the exchange and how participants in each group codified linguistic impoliteness.

First, the pervasive use of impoliteness-related language in response to the seasonal greetings posted by the PMs is a linguistic manifestation of the fact that the exchange constitutes a conflictual disagreement in which impolite language conveys feelings of anger, irritation, and contempt towards the PMs. The reactions that the posts triggered in most respondents point to emotional arousal of extreme dimensions resulting from ideological confrontation and the polarization of the digital audience. In other words, adverse emotional responses to these highly contested posts, which Langlotz and Locher (2012: 1591) associate with situations where “one feels offended or treated rudely”, seem to be the norm in the two corpora analyzed. Thus, a possible explanation for the impoliteness-related language deployed is the need to restore the moral values that the respondents perceive have been altered regarding aspects such as in-group solidarity, loyalty, and fairness in the case of PS and harm/care, fairness, and authority in the case of BJ. In addition, the findings have corroborated the escalatory nature of impoliteness in online media, considering the participants' engagement in trench warfare dynamics, a situation that facilitates the envisioning of an angry spiral, as exposure to negative emotions on social media has been proved to be contagious (Kramer et al., 2014).

Secondly, this study has verified the multifunctionality of impoliteness, adding to research by Garcés-Conejos Blitvich (2010b), Krikela (2022), or Schubert (2022), in the sense that impoliteness-related language does not only serve a face-attacking function against the PMs and those in the in-group, but it does also fulfill an instrumental role when it comes to reinforcing and strengthening ties with those in the out-group. In this respect, the impoliteness dealt with here is instrumental as it is employed ‘to serve some instrumental goal’ (Beebe 1995: 154) on the part of participants of the social media platform, be it of an affiliative or coercive nature (cf. Culpeper, 2011).

In general, the quantitative findings indicate that respondents to the OPs show a preference for *on-record* strategies, primarily through *PosImp* strategies, over the more implicit or *Off-RImp* ones, in line with previous studies dealing with impoliteness in online platforms (cf. Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2010b; Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2011; Anderson, 2021; and Teneketzi, 2022). However, results from the statistical tests indicate that both Spaniards and British respondents to the OPs vary in their use of strategies to the point that some categories seem to be favoured over others.

Regarding the preference for *PosImp* strategies, respondents from the two groups resort to different sub-strategies to disparage the PMs' positive face. The Spanish participants resort to insults addressed to the PM, which tend to be uninstigated and triggered by negative emotions, as the most frequent sub-strategy (cf. Teneketzi, 2022 for similar insights), together with attacks on the PM's public face through direct rectification and correction of his words. These sub-strategies constitute explicit attempts to bash the PM's public and private face and can lead to emotional contagion as part of the trench warfare dynamics.

In contrast, the English respondents seem to channel their strong feelings differently. They attack BJ's positive face by associating the PM with a negative aspect by issuing ill-wishes which, if fulfilled, would have a negative effect on his persona; and through dismissals which embody their lack of respect for the politician. When associating the PM with something negative, English respondents have also been reported to put into action some counter-argumentation to what the PM said or did as part of the disagreeing reply to the OP. Hence, respondents try to rebuke the PM's words as engaged and informed citizens. In contrast, in the case of bare insults or *ad hominem* attacks, there is little room for argumentation. Consequently, emotion seems to rule these hostile acts with which the speakers vent their anger or frustrations.¹⁷ In this respect, the Spanish

¹⁷ Research by Wollebæk et al. (2019) has shown that angry people are more likely to engage in online debates, and that anger has a direct effect on warfare trenches dynamics.

group can be said to display higher disinhibition in their use of bare insults, which seems to be intimately intertwined with the experiencing of strong emotions or affective impoliteness (Culpeper, 2011).

In general, these findings indicate that respondents to the PMs' posts set into motion impoliteness strategies that consistently reflect traditional alleged orientation to face assigned to each culture. On the one hand, when being intentionally impolite, Spaniards have the bashing and destruction of their interlocutor's positive face as their primary goal. This would explain their preference for a more direct and frank strategy, that of the insult and the attack on the other's public image, in line with research that attributes frankness and directness to Spaniards (cf. Mir, 1992; Cordella, 1996; Hernández-López, 2016). In contrast, the English respondents avoid the confrontation brought about by the insult and favor the association of the PM with something negative, the issuing of dismissals and ill-wishes. Through the use of dismissals, which reflect heightened emotional arousal on the part of the speaker and embody an element of future orientation, respondents indicate that they have some power over the PM by requesting some kind of action on his part. Not in vain, dismissals have been reported to imply "some sort of authority or hierarchical superiority over the addressee" (Dardano, 2022). Likewise, issuing ill-wishes reflects the negative emotional state of the speaker regarding an action with a future orientation and is a more indirect strategy to attack the PM than insults. In other words, the sub-strategies employed by the English respondents reflect a less confrontational conversational style than that of the Spaniards. What is more, some seem to invoke both the positive and negative face of the PM in their realization, as is the case of dismissals.

Regarding the use of *NegImp* strategies, their frequency distribution is statistically significant for the English group. According to Brown and Levinson's politeness framework (1987), directives are thought to impinge on the hearer's rights by placing a particular constraint on them and, hence, have been said to be a means to control the person (Drew and Couper-Kuhlen, 2014). Telling, recommending, and suggesting to the PM what (not) to do should be understood as actions aimed at restoring the social order that has been broken. The fact that these speech-acts are combined with counterclaims, challenges, or contradictions, aids the respondent's argumentation and mitigates the directive by justifying it. In other words, respondents present themselves as self-appointed experts in political issues who stand up for the rights of the out-group to restore the values breached, be it the PM's lack of honesty and integrity, his responsibility for the COVID-related deaths, or his looks. Thus, when faced with the need to be impolite, the English respondents deploy strategies that impinge on the PM's freedom of action.

Regarding *Off-RImp* strategies, they are more frequently deployed by the English respondents to codify the disagreement in an implicit rather than explicit way, thus, leaving the recovery of the implicature to the audience.¹⁸ This is in line with research that indicates that English speakers favor indirect realizations of disagreement, especially when compared to Spaniards (Díaz-Pérez, 2001; López Sako, 2008) and corroborates this preference for indirectness and a less confrontational conversational style. In addition, *Sarcasm* and *Implicated Impoliteness* have been traditionally associated with the English culture (cf. Martí i Casanova, 2000). *Off-RImp* strategies also fulfill an out-group cohesion function, considering that only those who possess shared knowledge and the same cognitive environment can access the intended meanings (cf. Martínez-Díaz, 2016). The enactment of these sub-strategies can also be explained because *Sarcasm* and *Implicated Impoliteness*, although not inherently humorous, can convey a comic effect (cf. Dynel, 2013). In other words, respondents can share a laugh at third parties, and the PMs, in this case, become the butt of the joke. This shows that humor can be deployed as an affiliative-aggressive mechanism (Miczo and Welter, 2006). Thus, rather than protecting their face by carrying the disagreement less explicitly, these strategies should also be viewed as a way of enhancing the face of the out-group by poking fun at the political leaders and having an entertaining/ludic effect.

Far from taking the reflections stated above as generalizations of the two cultures, the implications of the findings should be taken with caution, especially since the distinction between positive and negative impoliteness is not as clear-cut as desired. In fact, it could be argued that the differences pointed out in the use of some strategies could well be the result of the specific affordances of the social platform in which impoliteness-related language is deployed rather than the result of cultural differences.¹⁹ In other words, it could be that Twitter affordances are responsible for the impoliteness-related language found, considering that respondents in greater need to vent their frustration and anger would be more prone to post their replies on this platform.

Still, considering that culture is a factor for speech variation (Ogiermann, 2009), the differences identified could also be indicative of the underlying different cultural patterns identified by Hickey (1991, 2005) or Ardila (2005). In other words, when replying to the posts analyzed, attacking the positive face of the interlocutor seems to be the overriding criterion in contemporary Peninsular Spanish. In contrast, the English group selects strategies that threaten the negative face of the other together with strategies that favor implicitness (Steward, 2004) more than their Spanish counterparts.

¹⁸ Teneketzi (2022) found that off-record or implicational impoliteness was a more pervasive strategy on Reddit in comparison to Youtube, and pointed to the affordances of the online platform as responsible for this finding.

¹⁹ Mills (2009) states that cross-cultural studies may have relied too much on the notion of culture, and thus, they may have been underpinned by stereotyping and ideology.

6. Limitations and new venues for research

Last but not least, like all research, this paper should be interpreted in light of some limitations. First, it would be necessary to assess whether the preferences found here for the codification of impoliteness towards a non-aggressive tweet can be generalized into a broader sample and whether they apply to other related technologically-mediated contexts.

Likewise, a more in-depth analysis of how the different strategies combine amongst them and with other multimodal elements in the posts would be necessary to make findings more sound and rigorous. To do so, the role of emotion should be further explored together with the role played by multimodal elements that compensate for the lack of physical presence (gifs, emoji, memes, videos) together with capitalization and abbreviations. These elements can be critical in the production and perception of impoliteness as elements that help diffuse tension by construing humor and thus mitigating conflict escalation (Zappavigna, 2012) or as elements that intensify it.

On a somewhat different note, and considering the different preferences for the category of insults, further research on this strategy should be carried out with a focus on the public vs. interpersonal (Kwon and Gruzd, 2017) dimension. It would also be interesting to carry out a more in-depth analysis of the identified themes of name-calling and the significance of each theme in each culture. Finally, looking into the gender of the respondents may throw light on the similarities or differences brought about by gender, as gender is a significant way in which human beings differ in conflict resolution and, thus, in the codification of impoliteness.

Finally, attention should be paid to the escalatory nature of impoliteness on social media and to how the contagion effect works, considering that impoliteness-related discourse moves away from cooperation and argumentation to confrontation with the aggravation of face and an increasingly intense emotional display (Langlotz and Locher, 2012).

Funding

This research is part of the project entitled "Creation of a database, identification and classification of aggressive language on Twitter in English, French and Spanish (AGRETUITEFI) funded by Generalitat Valenciana. Award number AICO/2021/060. Open Access publication has been financed by Universitat Politècnica de València.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and publication.

Data availability

The accounts under examination are public. In spite of this, I have disguised the users' names and nicknames, except for those of the public figures.

References

- Alesina, A., Wacziarg, R., 2000. The economics of civic trust. In: Pharr, S.J., Putnam, R.D. (Eds.), *Disaffected Democracies: What's Troubling the Trilateral Countries?* Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, pp. 149–172.
- Allan, K., Burridge, K., 1991. *Euphemism and Dysphemism: Language Used as Shield and Weapon*. Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford.
- Anderson, M., 2021. The climate of climate change: impoliteness as a hallmark of homophily in YouTube comment threads on Greta Thunberg's environmental activism. *J. Pragmat.* 178, 93–107.
- Angouri, J., Tseliga, T., 2010. 'You HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT!' From E-disagreement to E-impoliteness in two online Fora. *J. Politeness Res.* 6, 57–82. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jplr.2010.004>.
- Ardila, J.A.G., 2005. *Sociopragmática y retórica interpersonal: La cortesía en inglés y castellano*. Edwin Mellen Press, Lampeter.
- Arundale, R., 2010. Constituting face in conversation: face, facework, and interactional achievement. *J. Pragmat.* 42, 2078–2105.
- Baker, P., Gabrielatos, C., Khosravini, M., Krzyżanowski, M., McEnery, T., 2008. A useful methodological synergy? Combining critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics to examine discourses of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press. *Discourse Soc.* 19 (3), 273–306.
- Beebe, L.M., 1995. Polite fictions: instrumental rudeness as pragmatic competence. In: Alatis, J.E., Straehle, C.A., Gallen-Berger, B., Ronkin, M. (Eds.), *Linguistics and the Education of Language Teachers: Ethnolinguistic, Psycholinguistics and Sociolinguistic Aspects*. Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics. Georgetown University Press, Georgetown, pp. 154–168.
- Blanco-Salgueiro, A., 2008. Cómo hacer cosas malas con palabras: actos ilocucionarios hostiles y los fundamentos de la teoría de los actos de habla. *Crítica* 40 (118), 3–27.
- Bolander, B., Locher, M.A., 2019. Ethics in pragmatics. *J. Pragmat.* 145, 83–90.
- Bou-Franch, P., Conejos-Blitvich, P. (Eds.), 2018. *Analyzing Digital Discourse: New Insights and Future Directions*. Palgrave Macmillan. (Palgrave), Cham.
- Bousfield, D., 2008. Impoliteness in Interaction. John Benjamins, Amsterdam. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.167>.
- Brown, Penelope, Levinson, Stephen C., 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Brundidge, J., 2010. Encountering "difference" in the contemporary public sphere: the contribution of the internet to the heterogeneity of political discussion networks. *J. Commun.* 60 (4), 680–700.
- Carretero, M., Maíz-Arévalo, C., Martínez, M.Á., 2015. An analysis of expressive speech acts in online task-oriented interaction by university students. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences* 173, 186–190.
- Cashman, H.R., 2006. Impoliteness in children's interactions in a Spanish/English bilingual community of practice. *J. Politeness Res.* 2 (2), 217–246.
- Coe, K., Kenski, K., Rains, S.A., 2014. Online and uncivil? Patterns and determinants of incivility in newspaper website comments. *J. Commun.* 64 (4), 658–679.
- Coleman, S., Blumler, J.G., 2009. *The Internet and Democratic Citizenship: Theory, Practice and Policy*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England.
- Cordella, M., 1996. Confrontational style in arguments: pragmatics and teaching outlook. *Lang. Cult. Curric.* 9, 148–162.
- Culpeper, J., 2005. Impoliteness and the weakest link. *J. Politeness Res.* 1 (1), 35–72.

- Culpeper, J., 1996. Towards an anatomy of impoliteness. *J. Pragmat.* 25 (3), 349–367. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(95\)00014-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(95)00014-3).
- Culpeper, J., 2007. Reflections on impoliteness, relational work and power. In: Bousfield, D., Locher, M. (Eds.), *Impoliteness in Language*. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, p. 22–53.
- Culpeper, J., 2010. Conventionalised impoliteness formulae. *J. Pragmat.* 42, 3232–3245.
- Culpeper, J., 2011. *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offense*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511975752>.
- Culpeper, J., Bousfield, D., Wichman, A., 2003. Impoliteness revisited: with special reference to dynamic and prosodic aspects. *J. Pragmat.* 35 (10–11), 1545–1579.
- D'Arcy, A., Young, T.M., 2012. Ethics and social media: implications for sociolinguistics in the networked public. *J. Sociolinguistics* 16 (4), 532–546.
- Danet, B., 2013. Flaming and linguistic impoliteness on a listserv. In: Herring, S., Stein, D., Virtanen, T. (Eds.), *Pragmatics of Computer-Mediated Communication*. de Gruyter Mouton, Berlin, pp. 639–664.
- Dardano, P., 2022. How to be impolite in ancient Greek: silencers and dismissals in Greek comedy. *Veleia* 39, 65–83.
- Darma, R.S., Wennyta, W., Fitri, N., 2017. Swearing words in 'celebrity read mean tweets' in Jimmy Kimmel late Night show: a sociolinguistic study. *JELT: Journal of English Language Teaching* 1 (1), 76–89.
- Davis, B.L., 2018. Evaluating evaluations: what different types of metapragmatic behaviour can tell us about participants' understandings of the moral order. *J. Politeness Res.* 14 (1), 121–151.
- Demjén, Z., Hardaker, C., 2016. Metaphor, impoliteness, and offence in online communication. In: Semino, E., Demjén, S. (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Metaphor and Language*. Routledge, London, pp. 353–369.
- Derks, D., Fischer, A.H., Bos, A.E.R., 2008. The role of emotion in computer-mediated communication: a review. *Comput. Hum. Behav.* 24 (3), 766–785.
- Díaz-Pérez, J.C., 2014. Creatividad léxica y descortesía en los medios de comunicación Virtual. *Revista de Filología de la Universidad de la Laguna* 32, 81–97.
- Díaz-Pérez, F.J., 2001. *Producción de actos de habla en inglés y en español. Un análisis contrastivo de estrategias de cortesía verbal*. Unpublished PhD dissertation. University of Jaén.
- Drew, P., Couper-Kuhlen, E. (Eds.), 2014. *Requesting in Social Interaction*, vol. 26. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Dynel, M., 2013. When does irony tickle the hearer? Towards capturing the characteristics of humorous irony. In: Dynel, M. (Ed.), *Developments in Linguistic Humour Theory*. John Benjamin, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, pp. 298–320.
- Enli, G.S., Skogerboe, E., 2013. Personalized-campaigns in party-centred politics: Twitter y Facebook as arenas for political communication. *Inf. Commun. Soc.* 16 (5), 757–774.
- Ermida, I., 2013. A beached whale posing in lingerie": conflict talk, disagreement and impoliteness in online newspaper commentary. *Revista Diacrítica* 27 (1), 95–130.
- Freelon, D., 2013. Discourse architecture, ideology, and democratic norms in online political discussion. *New Media Soc.* 17 (5), 772–791. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444813513259>.
- Fuentes-Rodríguez, C., Brenes, E., 2022. La formulación del insulto: variantes del discurso parlamentario. *Signos* 55 (108), 61–90.
- Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, P., 2010a. Introduction. The status quo and quo vadis of (im)politeness research. *Intercult. Pragmat.* 7 (4), 535–559.
- Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, P., Lorenzo-Dus, N., Bou-Franch, P., 2013. Relational work in anonymous, asynchronous communication: a study of (dis)affiliation on YouTube. In: Kecskes, I., Romero-Trillo, J. (Eds.), *Linguistic Aspects of Intercultural Pragmatics*. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, pp. 343–365.
- Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, P., 2010b. The YouTubification of politics, impoliteness and polarization. In: Rotimi, T. (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Discourse Behaviour and Digital Communication: Language Structure and Social Interaction*. IGI Global, pp. 540–562.
- Garfinkel, H., 1956. Conditions of successful degradation ceremonies. *Am. J. Sociol.* 61 (5), 420–424.
- Georgakopoulou, A., Vasilaki, M., 2018. The personal and/as the political small stories and impoliteness in online discussions of the Greek crisis. *Internet Pragmatics* 1 (2), 215–240.
- Giaxoglou, K., 2017. Storying leaks for sharing: the case of leaking the "Moscovici Draft" on Twitter. *Discourse, Context & Media*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2017.03.006>. Online Access.
- Goffman, E., 1967. The nature of deference and demeanor. In: Goffman, E. (Ed.), *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face-To-Face Behavior*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, pp. 47–95.
- Goffman, E., 1981. *Forms of Talk*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Penn.
- Graham, S.G., 2007. Disagreeing to agree: conflict, (im)politeness and identity in a computer-mediated community. *J. Pragmat.* 39 (4), 742–759.
- Graham, S.L., Hardaker, C., 2017. (Im)politeness in digital communication. In: Culpeper, J., Haugh, M., Kádár, D. (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Linguistics*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 785–814.
- Grant, W.J., Moon, B., Grant, J.B., 2010. Digital dialogue? Australian politicians' use of the social network tool Twitter. *Aust. J. Polit. Sci.* 45 (4), 579–604.
- Gulati, J., Williams, C.B., 2010. In: *Communicating with constituents in 140 characters or less: Twitter and the diffusion of Technology innovation in the United States congress*. Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1628247.
- Haidt, J., 2012. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. Vintage, London.
- Haidt, J., Joseph, C., 2004. Intuitive ethics: how innately prepared intuitions generate culturally variable virtues. *Daedalus* Fall, 55–66.
- Hairetdin, S.T., 2018. *Impoliteness and Gender in Computer-Mediated Communication: a Study of Insults on Tumblr*. University of Stavanger, 2018. MA Thesis.
- Hardaker, C., 2013. "Uh... not to be nitpicky, ..., but...the past tense of drag is dragged, not drug": an overview of trolling strategies. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict* 1 (1), 58–86.
- Harfoush, R., 2010. *Yes We Did. Cómo construimos la marca Obama a través de las redes sociales*. Planeta, Barcelona.
- Haugh, M., 2007. The discursive challenge to politeness research: an interactional alternative. *J. Politeness Res.* 3, 295–317.
- Haugh, M., 2010. Respect and deference. In: Locher, M.A., Graham, S.L. (Eds.), *Interpersonal Pragmatics*. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, pp. 271–288.
- Haugh, M., 2013. (Im)politeness, social practice and the participation order. *J. Pragmat.* 58, 52–72.
- Haverkate, H., 1993. Acerca de los actos de habla expresivos y comisivos en español. *Dialogos Hisp.* 12, 149–180.
- Hendricks, J.A., Denton, J.K., 2010. Social media and the millennial generation in the 2010 midterm election. In: Noor-al-Deen, H., Hendricks, J.A. (Eds.), *Social Media: Usage and Impact*. Lexington Books, pp. 183–200.
- Hernández-López, M.D.L.O., 2016. Disagreement and degrees of assertiveness in service encounters: purchase vs. problem-solving. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language* 4 (2), 87–104.
- Hickey, L., 1991. Comparative polite people in Britain and Spain. *Association for Contemporary Iberian Studies* 4, 2–7.
- Hickey, L., 2005. Politeness in Britain: 'it's only a suggestion'. In: Hickey, L., Steward, M. (Eds.), *Politeness in Europe*. Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, pp. 116–129.
- Janicki, K., 2017. *Language and conflict: arguing for interdisciplinarity and usefulness*. Bergen Language and Linguistics Studies.
- Java, A., Song, X., Finin, T., Tseng, B., 2007. Why We Twitter: understanding microblogging usage and communities. In: *Proceedings of the 9th WebKDD and 1st SNA-KDD 2007 Workshop on Web Mining and Social Network Analysis*, San Jose, pp. 56–65.
- Kádár, D.Z., Parvaresh, V., Ning, P., 2019. Morality, moral order, and language conflict and aggression – a position paper. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict* 7 (1), 6–31.
- Kádár, D.Z., 2017. *Politeness, Impoliteness and Ritual: Maintaining the Moral Order in Interpersonal Interaction*. CUP, Cambridge.
- Kádár, D.Z., Haugh, M., 2013. *Understanding Politeness*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139382717>.
- Kádár, D.Z., Márquez-Reiter, R., 2015. (Im)politeness and (im)morality: insights from intervention. *J. Politeness Res.* 11 (2), 239–260. <https://doi.org/10.1515/pr-2015-0010>.
- Karlsen, R., Steen-Johnsen, K., Wollebaek, D., Enjolras, B., 2017. Echo chamber and trench warfare dynamics in online debates. *Eur. J. Commun.* 32 (3), 257–273.

- Kaul de Marlangeon, S., Cordisco, A., 2014. La descortesía verbal en el contexto políticoideológico de las redes sociales. *Revista de Filología de la Universidad de la Laguna* 32, 145–161.
- Kramer, A.D.I., Guillory, J.E., Hancock, J.T., 2014. Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 111, 8788–8790.
- Krikela, S., 2022. Disagreements in a feminist digital safe space: the relationship between impoliteness, identity and power. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict* 10 (1), 111–139.
- Kwon, K.H., Gruzd, A., 2017. Is aggression contagious online? A case of swearing on Donald Trump's campaign videos on YouTube. In: Bui, T.X., Sprague, R. (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 50th Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, HICSS 2017M*, pp. 2165–2174.
- Lachernicht, L.G., 1980. Aggravating language: a study of abusive and insulting language. *International Journal of Human Communication* 13 (4), 607–687.
- Langlotz, A., Locher, M.A., 2012. Ways of communicating emotional stance in online disagreements. *J. Pragmat.* 44 (12), 1591–1606.
- Lauer, P., 1996. *Linguistic Politeness in Letters of Complaint*. Unpublished MA dissertation. University of Reading, UK.
- Lim, T.S., Bowers, J.W., 1991. Facework solidarity, approbation, and tact. *Hum. Commun. Res.* 17 (3), 415–450.
- Locher, M.A., Watts, R.J., 2005. Politeness theory and relational work. *J. Politeness Res.* 1, 9–33.
- López Sako, N.G., 2008. *Politeness in American English, Spanish and Japanese: the Case of (Dis)agreements in Conversation*. PhD dissertation. University of Granada.
- Lorenzo-Dus, N., 2009. "You're barking mad, I'm out": impoliteness and broadcast talk. *J. Politeness Res.* 5 (2), 159–187.
- Lorenzo-Dus, N., Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, P., Bou-Franch, P., 2011. On-line polylogues and impoliteness: the case of postings sent in response to the Obama reggaeton YouTube video. *J. Pragmat.* 43 (10), 2578–2593.
- Maíz-Arévalo, C., 2017. Expressive speech acts in educational e-chats. *Pragmática Sociocultural* 5 (2), 151–178.
- Mak, B., Chun, N., Chui, H.L., 2014. Impoliteness in Facebook status updates: strategic talk among colleagues "outside the workplace". *Text Talk* 34 (2), 165–185.
- Mancera, A., Pano, A., 2013. *El discurso político en Twitter: Análisis de mensajes que "trinan"*. Anthropos, Barcelona.
- Márquez-Reiter, R., Placencia, M.E., 2005. *Spanish Pragmatics*. Palgrave Macmillan, UK. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230505018>.
- Martí i Casanova, J.C., 2000. La traducció cultural: el concepte d'ironia en francès, anglés, espanyol i català. In: Lluís Martos, J. (Ed.), *La traducció del discurs*. Universitat d'Alacant, Alicante.
- Martínez-Díaz, E., 2016. De la ironía al sarcasmo: una aproximación al discurso parlamentario español. *Textos en Proceso* 2 (2), 194–216.
- Marwick, A.E., Boyd, D., 2010. I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media Soc.* 13 (1), 114–133. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313>.
- Mey, J.L., 2018. How social is the internet? *Internet Pragmatics* 1 (1), 13–28.
- Miczo, N., Welter, R.E., 2006. Aggressive and affiliative humor: relationships to aspects of intercultural communication. *J. Intercult. Commun. Res.* 35 (1), 61–77.
- Mills, S., 2009. Impoliteness in a cultural context. *J. Pragmat.* 41, 1047–1060.
- Mir, M., 1992. Do we all apologize the same? An empirical study on the act of apologizing by Spanish speakers learning English. *Pragmatics and Language Learning: MS* 3, 1–19.
- O'Driscoll, J., 1996. About face: a defence and elaboration of universal dualism. *J. Pragmat.* 25 (1), 1–32.
- Ogiermann, E., 2009. Politeness and in-directness across cultures: a comparison of English, German, Polish and Russian requests. *J. Politeness Res.* 5, 189–216.
- Oz, M., Zheng, P., Masullo Chen, G., 2018. Twitter versus Facebook: comparing incivility, impoliteness, and deliberative attributes. *New Media Soc.* 20 (9), 3400–3419.
- Papacharissi, Z., 2004. Democracy online: civility, politeness, and the democratic potential of online political discussion groups. *New Media Soc.* 6 (2), 259–283.
- Papacharissi, Z., 2014. *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics*. OUP, New York, NY.
- Parvareh, V., 2019. Moral impoliteness. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict* 7 (1), 79–104.
- Pharr, S.J., Putnam, R.D. (Eds.), 2000. *Disaffected Democracies: What's Troubling the Trilateral Countries?*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Rüsel, J.T., 2017. *Bringing Civility Back to Internet-Based Political Discourse on Twitter Research into the Determinants of Uncivil Behavior during Online Political Discussions on Twitter* (Master thesis).
- Schubert, C., 2022. Strategic functions of linguistic impoliteness in US primary election debates. *J. Lang. Polit.* 21 (3), 391–412.
- Searle, J., 1975. A taxonomy of illocutionary acts. In: Günderson, K. (Ed.), *Language, Mind and Knowledge*, vol. 7. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, pp. 344–369.
- Searle, J.R., 1976. A classification of illocutionary acts. *Lang. Soc.* 5, 1–23.
- Sifianou, M., Tzanne, A., 2010. Conceptualizations of politeness and impoliteness in Greek. *Intercult. Pragmat.* 7 (4), 661–687.
- Sinkeviciute, V., 2018. "Ya bloody drongo!!!": impoliteness as situated moral judgement on Facebook. *Internet Pragmatics* 1 (2), 271–302.
- Steward, M., 2004. Politeness in Britain: 'It's only a suggestion...'. In: Hickey, L., Steward, M. (Eds.), *Politeness in Europe*. Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, pp. 116–129.
- Stroud, N.J., 2017. Selective exposure theories. In: Kenski, K., Jamieson, K.H. (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Stroud, N.J., Scacco, J.M., Muddiman, A., Curry, A.L., 2014. Changing deliberative norms on news organizations' Facebook sites. *J. Computer-Mediated Commun.* 20 (2), 188–203. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12104>.
- Teneketzi, K., 2022. Impoliteness across social media platforms a comparative study of conflict on YouTube and Reddit. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict* 10 (1), 38–63.
- Terkourafi, M., 2008. Toward a unified theory of politeness, impoliteness, and rudeness. In: Bousfield, D., Locher, M.A. (Eds.), *Impoliteness in Language: Studies on its Interplay with Power in Theory and Practice*. Language, Power and Social Process. De Gruyter Mouton, pp. 25–53.
- Torcal, M., 2014. The decline of political trust in Spain and Portugal: economic performance or political responsiveness? The decline of political trust in Spain and Portugal: economic performance or political responsiveness? *Am. Behav. Sci.* 58 (12), 1542–1567.
- Torcal, M., Montero, J.R., 2006. Political disaffection in comparative perspective. In: Torcal, M., Montero, J.R. (Eds.), *Political Disaffection in Contemporary Democracies*. Social Capital, Institutions, and Politics. Routledge, London, UK, pp. 3–19.
- Tsoumou, J.M., 2021. An examination of verbal aggression in politically-motivated digital discourse. *International Journal of Social Media and Online Communities (IJSMOC)* 13 (2), 1–22.
- Turnage, A.K., 2008. Email flaming behaviors and organizational conflict. *J. Computer-Mediated Commun.* 13, 43–59.
- Vasilaki, M., 2020. Dear friends, traitors and filthy dogs: vocatives and impoliteness in online discussions of the Greek crisis. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict* 8 (2), 288–320.
- Vladimirov, D., House, J., Kázár, D.Z., 2021. Aggressive complaining on social media: the case of #MuckyMerton. *J. Pragmat.* 177, 51–64.
- Vraga, E.K., Thorson, K., Kligger-Vilenchik, N., Gee, E., 2015. How individual sensitivities to disagreement shape youth political expression on Facebook. *Comput. Hum. Behav.* 45, 281–289.
- Watts, R.J., 2008. Rudeness, conceptual blending theory and relational work. *J. Politeness Res.* 4 (2), 289–317.
- Watts, R.J., Ide, S., Ehlich, K., 1992. *Politeness in Language: Studies in its History, Theory and Practice*. Mouton, The Hague.
- Weigand, E., 2010. In: *Dialogue: the Mixed Game*, vol. 10. John Benjamins Publishing, Amsterdam.
- Wollebæk, D., Karlsen, R., Steen-Johnsen, K., Enjolras, B., 2019. Anger, fear, and echo chambers: the emotional basis for online behavior. *Social Media+ Society* 5 (2), 1–14.

- Wright, S., Graham, T., Jackson, D., 2016. Third space, social media and everyday political talk. In: Bruns, A., Enli, G., Skogerbø, E., Larsson, A.O., Christensen, C. (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Social Media and Politics*. Routledge, New York, pp. 74–88.
- Xie, C., 2018. Introduction: (Im)politeness, morality and the internet. *Internet Pragmatics* 1 (2), 205–214.
- Yang, Y., 2021. Disagreement strategies on Chinese forums: comparing data among Kong and Mainland China. *Sage Open* 11 (3), 1–22.
- Zappavigna, M., 2012. *Discourse of Twitter and Social Media: How We Use Language to Create Affiliation on the Web*. Continuum, London.
- Zappavigna, M., 2014. CoffeeTweets: bonding around the bean on Twitter. In: Seargeant, P., Tagg, C. (Eds.), *The Language of Social Media*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 139–160.

M^a Milagros del Saz-Rubio holds a PhD in Linguistics from the Universitat de València and is currently a senior lecturer at Universitat Politècnica de València. Her research interests include (Critical) Discourse Analysis, Pragmatics, Multimodality, and English for Specific Purposes. She has published numerous papers on these fields in peer-reviewed indexed journals such as *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Discourse and Society*, and *English for Specific Purposes*. She is currently a member of the AGRETUITEFI project where her research is focused on the identification and classification of aggressive language on Twitter.