
Sebastián Sánchez Castillo

sebastian.sanchez@uv.es
Assistant Professor. Language
Theory and Communication
Sciences Department.
University of Valencia, Spain.

Submitted

November 17, 2017

Approved

March 3, 2018

© 2018

Communication & Society

ISSN 0214-0039

E ISSN 2386-7876

doi: 10.15581/003.31.2.137-153

www.communication-society.com

2018 – Vol. 31(2)

pp. 137-153

How to cite this article:

Sánchez Castillo, S. (2018).
Audiovisual Politeness in TV
Political Interviews. *Communication
& Society* 31(2), 137-153.

This paper is financed by the Spanish
Ministry of Economy, Industry, and
Competitiveness and by European Union
ERDF funds under the framework of
R&D+i funds of the National Plan
"Communication flows in processes of
political mobilization: media, blogs, and
opinion leaders" (CSO2013-43960-R)
and (CSO2016-77331-C2-1-R) directed
by Guillermo López García (University of
Valencia- Spain).

Audiovisual Politeness in TV Political Interviews

Abstract

This study analyses audiovisual politeness in political interviews of the four major candidates for Spanish prime minister in the December 20, 2015 elections, to wit: Mariano Rajoy, Pedro Sánchez, Pablo Iglesias and Albert Rivera. We analyse quantitative data related to specific narrative elements including staging, insertion of audiovisual elements and the building and fracturing of discourse, among other things. In short, we have tried to collect data on the audiovisual discourse structure employed and its impact on the resulting political discourse. The results show that the audiovisual coverage afforded the four candidates by those who control the audiovisual discourse is not homogeneous.

Keywords

Audiovisual communication, political communication, TV production, political discourse

1. Audiovisual political interviews

When it was still an undefined space, before becoming a forum for open, online communication, television was a sphere for political debate which went as far as to "usurp functions belonging to constitutional institutions," (Muñoz-Alonso & Rospir, 1999: 16), deconceptualise political discourse and transform it into show business in what Sartori (1997: 78) called "the dramatization of the trivial and the manipulation of democratic culture." Unwavering still today is the worship of image, an excess of oft-mismanaged iconography and "Americanization" (Muñoz-Alonso & Rospir, 1995: 141), all of which, according to certain economic principles, moulds the mass audiences' perception of leaders.

Today's hybridization of political messages has kept TV afloat as the main space for political communication, a space in which the candidates who best promote their image and discourse are the most sought after. The techniques and processes available to political players make up political communication, which revolves around media seduction with the power of persuasion as its primary necessity, inasmuch as "politicians, to be recognized, need not have convictions, rather they must rack up appearances," (Berrocal et al. 2003: 8).

Political parties and their candidates tend to give more and more weight to audiovisual communication media, particularly television, in their campaigning. For many political leaders, a good performance on a TV interview is still key to social penetration and a solid electoral

showing. Television has greatly influenced election campaigns since the 1960s and continues to do so today. Throughout political communication strategies, television is the main information channel for 80% of the electoral roll. During televised debates, at stake for Spanish politicians is the chance to shore up the support of those who have already chosen which candidate to support and to mobilize their voting bloc. Rarely do these debates change voter intention.

The political interview is a genre organized around two interlocutors, the interviewer and the interviewee, who maintain an asymmetrical relationship in which the journalist's control of the discourse and the politician's social power are married in a negotiation exercise linked to linguistic politeness (Cortés & Bañón, 1997). The genre stands on its own, defined as the act of communicating information or the opinions of public figures, experts or others who appear on the news for the benefit of the news audience (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1991). As Hirsch noted, interviews appear to be a cooperative genre, but this is not the case when the interviewer tries to domineer the interview session, affecting its structure and the structural complexity of the turn-taking process, (1989: 167).

Per Fetzer and Weizman (2006), political interviews are carried out between two interlocutors (first frame) but are designed for an often-absent external audience (second frame). Nevertheless, there exists in the audiovisual production of political interviews a third frame, that which consists of the objective choices to divide time and space as narrative elements which can modulate the resulting discourse. The role of the "collective and physically absent [party] who shapes the discursive activity of both interviewer and interviewee," (Cortés & Bañón, 1997: 51) is relegated to the agent in the third frame, the audiovisual producer. The AV producer can interrupt the negotiation between interviewer and interviewee and designs audiovisual politeness as a fundamental element in elaborating the discourse.

Journalism's increasing autonomy has led to a diversification of entertainment. Indeed, journalism has influenced and introduced new elements in entertainment, not the other way around. It is possible that journalism (including audiovisual journalism) has given way to hyperjournalism, as posited by Bolin (2014). Television political interviews, with their content and staging, combine the necessary ingredients for conducting this study on audiovisual journalism, politics and the growing journalistic sub-field of cultural production.

Staging and production, that is, how the most significant audiovisual elements are displayed, are an essential element of this study. Direct audiovisual interviews of political leaders consist of various intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The intrinsic factors stem either from current journalistic discourse or from specific editorial objectives. The extrinsic factors are the *mise-en-scène*, montage and specific audiovisual staging as questions are posed. In TV political interviews, the deliberate controlling of the audiovisual discourse and the narrative elements therein can affront the principles of politeness, neutrality and collaboration.

Brenes (2012), Christie (2002), Cuenca (2013), Mullany (2002) and Tanaka (2004, 2009) have studied politeness in TV political interviews, taking it to imply deliberate, strategic conduct. Nevertheless, to today's date there have been no studies on audiovisual politeness, the audiovisual production techniques that can favour one discourse over another. This study aims to analyse audiovisual politeness, its structure and the elements thereof.

2. Politeness and audiovisual discourse

As Jucker says, in keeping with Leech (1983), political interviews are based on maintaining the principle of politeness, a maxim which might be expressed as minimizing the expression of impolite beliefs and maximizing the expression of polite beliefs or, as Lakoff (1973) posits,

one in which the interviewer, instead of imposing his will, should provide options and make the receiver feel good.

Overall, we take politeness strategies to mean a series of linguistic or discursive tools aimed at minimizing the impact of a speech act on its recipient (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goldsmith, 2007, 2008). Specifically, politeness consists of “lexical, syntactic, morphological and even phonological elements (such as intonation), that perform the pragmatic function of establishing solidarity (i.e., proximity) with the listener and avoid imposing upon the latter. Per these functions, we can speak of positive politeness in the first case and negative politeness in the second,” (Heffelfinger, 2014: 97). The next step is to identify the politeness typology arising from the process of building the audiovisual discourse.

Politeness has been studied and accepted from many angles. In 1976, Ferguson described politeness as “daily routines, such as greetings, farewells and expressions of gratitude,” (1976: 43). Advances in the discipline have defined politeness as a cognitive model based on a series of expectations or mental representations built upon cultural norms and patterns, and internalized through experience (Escandell, 1998). Fraser (1990) and Bargiela-Chiappini (2003) maintain that politeness is not just a way of using language, rather it is also part of grammar. They hold that it is a conversational contract, guided by a set of rights and obligations subject to negotiation.

More in line with our study, Charaudeau (2012) highlights the importance of other factors related to context, such as the specific purpose of the interaction, the identity(ies) of the participants, the type of exchange (personal or public) and the influence of collective imaginaries. Several studies have shown that journalistic interviews, particularly of the political ilk, seek to create a confrontational environment (Clayman et al. 2006; Garcés, 2010; Mullany, 2002). Moreover, Garcés (2010) posits that the journalist’s impoliteness increases the more the interviewee’s opinions differ from those of the general public.

As Heffelfinger (2014) points out, politeness in communicative discourse, including on television, per the Brown and Levinson model (1987), is based on the concept of face or public self-image, the idealized way in which an individual strives to be perceived and acts by and in the presence of others (Goffman, 1959, 1967). For Brown and Levinson (1987), any person exposed to an interview has both positive and negative face. Positive face is related to one’s desire that one’s self-image be approved of and appreciated. Negative face deals with freedom of action and the desire to not be imposed upon.

It is difficult for the interlocutors to save face during interviews, given that certain acts therein constitute face-threatening acts and contradict individual desires of acceptance and independence. Among these acts are criticism, irreverence, orders and intimidation. Face-threatening acts are unavoidable and the interviewees have different strategies for communicating the same discourse.

If face-threatening acts are accepted as inevitable, interviewees can rely on a variety of skills to transmit the same message. According to Heffelfinger (2014), *face-threatening acts* can be carried out *bald-on-record* (directly) or *off-record*, that is, in a concealed or indirect way. Whereas bald-on-record politeness respects conversational norms and the Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1975), off-record politeness breaks them.

Here we should mention Cuenca’s 2013 study, in which the author holds that one of the norms of political interviews is that the interviewer should maintain a neutral stance or one that at least seems so. Nevertheless, in audiovisual interviews, live-broadcast or not, along with the interviewer’s neutrality the production team’s piecing together of the story must also be considered. Given that they choose the shots to air, they can violate this journalistic neutrality and asymmetry between the interlocutors, thus modifying the interaction. The producer is an active player in the construction/destruction of the interlocutor’s image, as well as the potential implicit reinforcement of the latter’s arguments and image in the eyes of the audience.

Per Cortés and Bañón (1997), interviews imply asymmetry in roles. The journalist's functional-discursive control must fuse with the politician's social power in a "crossroads of hierarchies" in which neither of the two should come off too explicit in their control over the other if he or she seeks to maintain discursive equilibrium and preserve his/her status in the interaction. The audiovisual interview expands this asymmetry and transforms the producer into an active agent who can disrupt the perception of the interview as a cooperative discourse arising solely between interviewer, interviewee and viewer. Thus, the producer assumes a decisive role in the construction of the discursive "figure."

Just as Fuentes (2006), Fetzer and Bull (2008) and Cuenca (2013) posited that the use of vocatives reveals the struggle for discursive power between interviewer and interviewee and represents a fine line between politeness and impoliteness, television production can determine whether the discursive approach be interpreted as polite or impolite.

Ultimately, audiovisual politeness is a strategic behaviour projected by the host through the propositions of the audiovisual producer, which then reach the interviewee and force him to manage them, at times favourably and at times unfavourably. In addition to the semantic content of the speech act itself, our research focuses on the act's pragmatic implications derived from the use of the following audiovisual constructs: $Q_{(m)}$ LS), the question's intensity ($Q_{(m)I}$), split-screen questions ($Q_{(m)SS}$), questions with supporting video ($Q_{(m)SV}$), and questions with crawls ($Q_{(m)C}$). We will also examine the use of these techniques during the interviews of the four candidates for prime minister and address the following hypothesis and research question:

H_i: Audiovisual politeness is not homogeneous across the interviews of the four candidates.

RQ_j: Which of the four candidates faced a more unfavourable interview in terms of audiovisual discourse?

3. Leaders in Spain's audiovisual political discourse

In 2015, Mariano Rajoy (incumbent prime minister, People's Party) lost the ratings battle to Pedro Sánchez (Spanish Socialist Worker's Party or PSOE) and Albert Rivera (Ciudadanos) during his interview with Pedro Piqueras on *Telecinco*. Nonetheless, the prime minister managed to outdo Pablo Iglesias (Podemos) with the 2.8 million who tuned in to his interview session during that evening's news programming. The interview of Prime Minister [Mariano Rajoy](#) garnered 2,881,000 viewers, a 16.5% share. Rajoy's interview aired just before "Sálvame Deluxe," which probably did not help the prime minister given Piqueras's audience differs greatly from that of the dating show. By way of comparison, while the dating show aired, 755,000 people (a 4% share) watched the three-person debate among the leaders of PSOE, [Pedro Sánchez](#); Ciudadanos, [Albert Rivera](#); and Podemos, [Pablo Iglesias](#), on 13TV, the only channel to air the event organized by the website of the newspaper *El País* and in which Mariano Rajoy did not participate.

Sánchez's interview garnered 3,000,000 viewers—an 18% share—his second most-watched interview at the time, just behind the 3,098,000 viewers who tuned into another interview of the PSOE leader, again by Piqueras, on 14 July 2014. The latter undoubtedly benefited from the Big Brother 16 gala, whose many followers turned on the channel before the reality show's episode began and bumped up the ratings for the Piqueras-Sánchez interview. Podemos's leader, Pablo Iglesias, garnered similar figures the following day (17.8% share, 2,628,000 viewers), while Albert Rivera's interview garnered a 17.3% share and 2,950,000 viewers, his most watched interview on *Telecinco* (see Table 1).

Table 1. Ratings leaders

	Audience*	Share	Time
Mariano Rajoy	2.8	16.6%	33 min, 39 sec.
Pedro Sánchez	3.0	18.1%	23 min, 42 sec.
Pablo Iglesias	2.6	17.8%	23 min, 44 sec.
Albert Rivera	2.9	17.3%	21 min, 49 sec.

* In millions

Since he took office on 20 December 2011, Mariano Rajoy's television appearances have been minimal. Most significant is that he has lost more and more viewers, reaching surprisingly low figures for a prime minister. On 10 September 2012, he debuted on *Televisión Española (TVE)* with a solid 20.6% share. During his 20 January 2014 interview on *Antena 3*, his share dropped to 15.3%. During his 26 January 2015 interview with *Telecinco*'s Pedro Piqueras, he again earned a good share of 18.9%, which fell to 17.5% during his 6 July 2015 *Telecinco* interview.

On 1 October of the same year, Gloria Lomana interviewed the prime minister during *Antena 3*'s news hour and garnered a measly 12.8% share. On 26 October, Ana Blanco's interview of the prime minister on *TVE* earned an 11.5% share, even more pitiful considering that the debate between Iglesias and Rivera a week earlier on *La Sexta* garnered an astonishing 25.2% share. It would be worthwhile to determine whether the merit belongs to the interviewee or the format. Rajoy has always appeared on news and informational programming, where the rigid, traditional structure is much less attractive to some viewers than what comes off as an easy-going conversation in a pub. Only once has the prime minister appeared in a more relaxed and pleasant TV setting than the set of a news programme: on 14 September 2015, Rajoy went with TV personality Ana Rosa, in the midst of her tour of Spanish politicians' private lives, to have a pint. The 20.9% share was solid but lacklustre compared to the show's typical performance, which tops the morning time slot by several points.

Turning now to Pedro Sánchez, one of the candidate's television appearances left a mark on his media presence: on 17 September 2014 he placed a surprise phone call to the *Sálvame* show to promise the host that when he became prime minister he would put an end to the *Toro de la Vega* bull-fighting tournament. Since it was a surprise call, it didn't affect the program's ratings, but it did have an enormous echo online and across social media, whose users were interested in what they took to be a new form of political communication in the PSOE. That same night he appeared for a casual interview on *El Hormiguero* (The Anthill), where the candidate notched his best appearance of the season with a 15.5% share, starting a trend that has yet to be studied in detail, whereby the political guests interact with the show's ant puppet mascots and help perform science experiments, something which already seems to be largely accepted. On 21 September 2014 Sánchez appeared on Risto Mejide's *Viajando con Chester* (Travelling with Chester) and achieved a 10.4% share, a record number of viewers for the program, albeit short-lived, as the following Sunday Pablo Iglesias would best Sanchez's mark by a great deal.

Indeed, Iglesias had become such a surefire way to guarantee good ratings during debates and interviews that entertainment news and gossip TV programs baptized him "Mr. Share." The figure of Iglesias is inseparable from this TV appearance because, before becoming the surprise of the European elections, in which Podemos won five seats, viewers

¹ How Iglesias defends himself on TV. 14 November 2014 *El Confidencial Digital*. Retrieved from: https://www.elconfidencialdigital.com/medios/protege-ahora-Pablo-Iglesias-televisiones_o_2381761811.html

already knew him as a frequent guest during debates on *La Sexta*, *Cuatro* and even the right-wing programme *Intereconomía*. The lattermost, following Iglesias's success on the program, began to ask themselves if, in the pursuit of higher ratings, they hadn't overly favoured a politician whose ideology is the polar opposite of the show's.

On 28 September 2014 Risto Mejide interviewed the Podemos leader on *Viajando con Chester*, obtaining a 14.5% share, then a record for the *Cuatro* programme. On 23 February 2015, Iglesias's interview with Pablo Piqueras of *Telecinco* news garnered the channel's highest share in a decade at 22.2%. Nevertheless, on 3 May Iglesias appeared on *Antena 3's Espejo Público* (Public Mirror), garnering only a 17.9% share, not far off the show's typical mark. In June, an on-stage interview with Ana Rosa garnered a 21.7% share.

When Rosa spent the day jogging at a park and chatting with Iglesias at his Madrid residence, the episode failed to garner off-the-chart ratings but had a big media impact when it aired on 7 September 2015. Still, just five days later his appearance on *Un tiempo nuevo* (A new era) on *Cuatro*, once again with Ana Rosa Quintana, garnered a pathetic 3.5% share. From this, we might conclude that if a show is tanking, not even Iglesias can save it.

Confirming once again his viewer-magnet fame, his 18 October 2015 debate-dialogue with Albert Rivera on *Salvados* set a record for the programme and marked a milestone in the history of televised debates in Spain.

Rivera's 2 November 2014 appearance on *Viajando con Chester* garnered an 11.2% share, out-pacing the show's average. In the show's following season, Rivera's 10 May 2015 interview earned a 9.6% share. Despite being lower than the previous year's, it was still a solid figure because the new host of *Chester*, Pepa Bueno, couldn't match the results of the Risto Mejide era. During his 20 January 2015 appearance on *El Hormiguero*, Rivera obtained a 13.8% share with a light-hearted, funny interview. When he returned to the show on 30 June, the share climbed to 15.8%. But Rivera's best TV appearance was the 25.2% share during his debate with Pablo Iglesias on *Salvados*, especially significant keeping in mind that most people took Rivera for the winner of the dialectical encounter watched by more than five million people.

Over the last two years, politicians have frequently appeared on shows far removed from their home turf, such as *El Hormiguero*. Consequently, Pedro Sánchez's call in to *Sálvame*, so revolutionary three and a half years ago, wouldn't lift any eyebrows today. Still, the impact these shows have on votes is another issue; they are different dimensions and, despite bearing some relationship, they come together in different ways. One might say that as goes the relationship between politics and television, so goes that between television and Twitter, where, the mere fact that a program is a trending topic or has a sizable online impact doesn't mean that it will be a ratings leader or even be amongst the most-viewed programs.

4. Methodology

4.1. The Interviews

We have analysed the four interviews that aired on *Telecinco* during the 9 PM news hour hosted by Pedro Piqueras. Alberta Rivera's interview aired on Wednesday, 25 November 2015,² Pedro Sanchez's on Thursday, 26 November 2015,³ Pablo Iglesias's on Friday, 27 November 2015 and⁴ Mariano Rajoy's on Monday, 30 November 2015⁵. The interviews lasted

2 http://www.Telecinco.es/informativos/nacional/Entrevista-Pedro_Piqueras-Albert_Rivera-Ciudadanos_2_2089530232.html

3 http://www.Telecinco.es/informativos/Pedro_Sanchez-Pedro_Piqueras-Informativo_Noche_2_2090055205.html

4 http://www.Telecinco.es/informativos/Pedro_Piqueras-Pablo_Iglesias-Podemos-elecciones_20D_2_2090580197.html

21m 40s, 23m 42s, 23m 44s and 33m 39s, respectively. These TV interviews were the only chance for the politicians to be interviewed in a generalist TV environment with the same audiovisual production conditions, duration, staging, composition and audience. Furthermore, they were conducted less than a month before the 20 December 2015 general elections. This audiovisual homogeneity is considered a prerequisite for a consistent, reliable analysis. Perhaps Monday (Rajoy's interview) and Thursday (Sanchez's interview) were better days for an interview because Rivera's Wednesday interview had to compete with Champions League football and Friday is the worst day because people watch less television. We should also mention that in 2015 *Telecinco* was ratings leader for the third consecutive year. During the Monday-Sunday night-time slot, the channel was the undisputed leader. In 2015 *Telecinco's* news programming was the most watched, in terms of average share during the mid-day and evening editions, per Kantar Media⁶.

Rivera's interview consisted of 12 questions that revolved around three major topics: Jihadism, the post-electoral pact between the central government and Catalonia, and Catalonia's financing. The headline on *Telecinco's* web page, where users can watch the entire interview, reads "I put Spain before the elections." There is also a synopsis of the interview which reads, "The best way to tell Arthur Mas that he hasn't won is to tell him that Ciudadanos has won." During the interview, the audiovisual producers included a crawl with a certain political motivation that put the interviewee in a somewhat compromising situation: "The people stealing from Catalonia have a name: Pujol."

Sanchez's interview consisted of 16 questions revolving around six major topics: the political situation in Venezuela, his personal experience as the party's Secretary General, the current political scenario in Catalonia, poverty and how to solve it, how to form the next government and the war in Syria. The headline on *Telecinco's* website reads, "Podemos has to explain why they refuse to join the anti-Jihadist fight," and promotes the interview with the following summary, "What worries me least is my individual future." Rather, Sánchez guarantees, "[the most important thing] is the needs of the rest of the people." Among the on-screen crawls appearing during Sánchez's interview were, "The PSOE will not attend Saturday's march against the war" and "On December 20th, what I care least about is my individual future, because we have a lot at stake."

Pablo Iglesias faced 18 questions on 11 topics, including: that morning's university debate between Iglesias and Rivera which the traditional parties' leaders did not attend, the fight against Daesh, election polls, a Podemos member's insinuations that Ciudadanos's leader Albert Rivera used drugs, Podemos's relationship with the Government of Venezuela, first measures and whether he would live in the Moncloa Palace if elected prime minister. The website's headline reads "We can't fight terrorism by signing a piece of paper and posing for a picture" and the summary of the interview, "Iglesias, the leader of Podemos, takes a stand against further Spanish involvement in the fight against Daesh, arguing that the bombing strategy doesn't make us any safer." The most compromising crawls that appeared on-screen during Iglesias's interview were: "Instead of bombs and speech's like Aznar's, it would be more effective to determine who we're doing business with," "What we did in Iraq has led to greater insecurity for Europeans," "I'm sure Monedero doesn't think about what he might be saying when he's joking around," "I don't want Catalonia to leave Spain, and to make sure they don't, we have to bring them in closer," "We're 100% available

⁵ http://www.Telecinco.es/informativos/Entrevista_Integra-Mariano_Rajoy_2_2092155252.html

⁶ Detailed 2015 ratings: Telecinco leader four years running, La Sexta record highs and La 1 record lows (29 December 2015) Ver Tele

Retrieved from: http://vertele.eldiario.es/verteletv/actualidad/Audiencias-detalle-Telecinco-laSexta-record_o_1752124805.html

for any kind of meeting with Lilian Tintori, the wife of the Venezuelan political leader Leopoldo López.”

Prime Minister Rajoy faced 23 questions during his 33m 39s interview that was conducted in two segments, one before and one after the *Telecinco* general news programming. The crawl on *Telecinco*'s website reads, “The prime minister wants to lower Social Security contributions,” and the website's synopsis of the interview, “The head of the executive branch has proposed a reduction in Social Security contributions and thinks the most voted party should govern.” The interview's dynamic was institutional and ministerial, and largely focused on international politics. The topics addressed during the interview dealt with Obama's potential visit to Spain, military deployment in Syria and the fight against terrorism, Turkish-Russian relations, Catalan independence, the pro-Catalan independence party Popular Unity Candidacy (CUP), corruption in Rajoy's People's Party and the latest news about his then 10-year-old son Juanito, who had a brush with fame after making some cheeky remarks during an interview alongside his father, who then cuffed him on the back of the head. Among the most salient crawls summarizing Rajoy's statements during his interview were the following:

- “God willing I don't have to make any more decisions than the ones I've already made regarding Catalonia”
- “I have no intention of invoking article 155 of the Constitution. I will be cautious and act responsibly”
- “I think Mr. Mas has made a mistake and the future of Catalonia is in the CUP's hands”
- “I'm willing to take any and every kind of decision to make sure corruption doesn't occur again”
- “I was most concerned about preventing Spain from being bailed out and from declaring bankruptcy, and unemployment”
- “I did what I've done in previous elections: debate the opposition leader”

In terms of audiovisual production, the interviews are conducted within a compositional framework. The interviewees occupy the left part of the frame, with a compositional scanning that normalized the discourse, from left to right. Medium long shots with hands on table serving as a reference point were used for all four interviewees, in addition to a slight three quarters angle view prioritising the interviewee's face while maintaining an axis of action with the interviewer. The compositional symmetry and the balanced distribution of objects imbued the interview with a sense of visual monotony from the outset. The production team employed crane shots (also known as boom shots or jibs) when discursive intensity was highest and to compose master shots when introducing new subjects. During the split-screen video shots, the interviewees always appeared under a similar structure and spacing and the same compositional possibilities (Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4).



Figure 1. Mariano Rajoy
(Source: *Telecinco. Mediaset España*)



Figure 2. Pedro Sánchez
(Source: *Telecinco. Mediaset España*)



Figure 3. Pablo Iglesias
(Source: *Telecinco. Mediaset España*)



Figure 4. Albert Rivera
(Source: *Telecinco*. Mediaset España)

4.2. Procedure

We will answer both H_1 and RQ_1 through a quantitative analysis (means and standard deviations) of question intensity $Q_{(n)I}$, listening shots $Q_{(n)LS}$, split-screen $Q_{(n)SS}$, supporting videos $Q_{(n)SV}$ and crawls $Q_{(n)C}$. Then, we will measure the correlation between $Q_{(n)I}$ and the other variables to determine the audiovisual treatment afforded to each candidate.

We have performed a descriptive analysis and a hypothesis test of the variables. For the latter, we used SPSS IBM v21.0 to perform a bivariate (Pearson) correlation (R_{x-y}) with the following variables:

1. $Q_{(n)I}$ (Question/intensity) An intense question is a pointed question that deals with current politics, forces the interviewer to stake out a position or questions the interviewer's position. We've used a ten-point Likert scale (1 being extremely positive and 10 being extremely negative) to more precisely determine the level of intensity or difficulty of the question posed to the interviewee. For example, the leader of Podemos, Pablo Iglesias, would receive a very high score for the question related to Podemos's relations with the Government of Venezuela. A low-scoring question would be that posed to Mariano Rajoy about his scheme for lowering taxes. Given the subjective nature of this variable, we thought it necessary to assure its internal consistency through intercoder reliability. Nonetheless, due to the limited sample size (69 questions), we were unable to carry out an intercoder reliability process and instead focused on reliability. The reliability process was carried out by two external judges/readers who had not participated in the initial coding. Their analysis of the total sample yielded an 89% reliability, which, being greater than 80%, can be considered a highly acceptable figure (Neuendorf, 2002).
2. $Q_{(n)LS}$ (Question during listening shot) A listening shot question is one in which the camera shoots the interviewee while the interviewer is posing a question. If used when the interviewer poses the interviewee a question with a high intensity score, a listening shot can amplify the question's face-threatening potential or represent a lack of audiovisual politeness. A question of great political import (high $Q_{(n)I}$ score) can be uncomfortable for the interviewee and keeping him on screen while the question is posed can create a troubling situation and render him defenceless before the viewer. A tough question can elicit gestures and facial expressions of concern or displeasure which, during a close-up on the interviewee, could affect both the interviewee's response to the question and the viewing public's perception of him.



Figure 5. Listening shot
(Source: *Telecinco*. Mediaset España)

3. $Q_{(m)SS}$ (Question with split-screen). The split-screen question is a compositional tool used to divide the screen into parts: the shot of the interviewee and a supporting video that amplifies his discourse, whether positively or negatively. The video keeps the interviewee in check, making it difficult for him to affirm things not supported by the on-screen images (Figure 6), or corroborate or refute any statements that have been made. Moreover, shots of the interviewee's approval, surprise, disbelief and other gestures he may make while watching the video are always visible. Neither the candidate nor his team choose or agree to the split-screen images before the interview takes place. On the contrary, they appear in the program's pre-established running order to which only the producer's and director's teams are privy. Seeing these images can leave the interviewee defenceless and taken aback if the audiovisual story contradicts or refutes statements he has made.



Figure 6. Split-screen
(Source: *Telecinco*. Mediaset España)

4. $Q_{(m)SV}$ (Question with supporting video). During interviews it is common to play a video on top of the shot of the interviewee, though it is often the interviewee's off-camera voice on the audio track (Figure 7). This narrative tool amplifies the discourse within the interviewee's responses, providing an audiovisual argument that can favour or undermine his statements. If the images displayed on top of the interviewee's shot coincide with the statements, an extra level of truthfulness is attributed to the discourse. Nevertheless, sometimes the interviewee's argument

contradicts the on-screen images, which can generate uncertainty as to the truthfulness of his statements and confuse the viewer.



Figure 7. Supporting video
(Source: Telemadrid. Mediaset España)

5. Q_mC (Question with crawl). Static and scrolling crawls summarize an idea or an important point of reference to keep in mind (Figure 8). Following headline criteria, crawls allow the viewer to remember one of the interview's main ideas, strengthen the discourse therein and at times express ideas contrary to those espoused by the interviewee. Crawls are an intrinsic part of audiovisual information. Beyond their narrative possibilities—function, duration, simultaneity, typology, location and their general position on the television screen—they help define the personality of the interviewee and relay information or statements. Displaying the crawls at the right time reminds the viewer of the main statements or ideas the show's producer or director wants to highlight. The guest has no say in the crawls and does not know when they will appear on screen.



Figure 8. Question/Answer with crawl
(Source: Telemadrid. Mediaset España)

5. Results

After analysing the variables, notable differences have arisen in the intensity of the questions posed to the candidates and the narrative modes of the interview's audiovisual production. Table 2 shows how frequently the audiovisual tools of split-screen, crawls and supporting videos are used. The split-screen technique was used most in the interview of

Podemos's candidate (n=12; 66%) and least in that of Ciudadanos (n=5; 41%). Supporting videos, that is, those that bolster the interviewee's discourse, were used much less frequently during Sanchez's interview (n=3; 18%), and much more so during the prime minister's (n=10; 43%). Mid-interview crawls used to summarize much like a headline what the interviewee has stated were used most of all with Sánchez (n=11; 68%), and hardly at all with Iglesias (n=6; 33%).

Table 2. Candidate/audiovisual tools

	Q(n)SS	Q(n)SV	Q(n)C
Mariano Rajoy	n=8 (34%)	n=10 (43%)	n=9 (39%)
Pedro Sánchez	n=11 (68%)	n=3 (18%)	n=11 (68%)
Pablo Iglesias	n=12 (66%)	n=9 (50%)	n=6 (33%)
Albert Rivera	n=5 (41%)	n=7 (58%)	n=7 (58%)

Regarding question intensity $P_{(n)I}$, a central part of this research, both Rivera and Iglesias were exposed to similarly intense or difficult questions, at (M=6, SD=1.537) and (M=6.0, SD=1.283), respectively. Table 3 shows that Sánchez had the highest mean (M=7.19, SD=1.167). At the other extreme is Primer Minister Rajoy with a mean of 5.48 and a standard deviation of 1.275. These data show that the socialist candidate encountered the greatest number of uncomfortable or difficult questions (M=7.19), whereas Rajoy faced the fewest challenging questions from a discursive point of few, despite being asked more questions overall.

Table 3. Candidate/question intensity

Q _(n)	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Mariano Rajoy	23	3	8	5.48	1.275
Pedro Sánchez	16	5	9	7.19	1.167
Pablo Iglesias	18	4	8	6.00	1.283
Albert Rivera	12	4	9	6.00	1.537

The use of listening shots $L_{(n)S}$ during questions as an audiovisual politeness strategy (see Table 4) differed greatly from candidate to candidate. Rivera was posed the fewest questions during interviewee listening shots (M=0.66), and Rajoy's figure (M=1.1) was similarly low. It was the Podemos and PSOE candidates who were posed the greatest number of questions during listening shots, (M: 2.4) and (M: 2.2), respectively. Clearly, the next step in the analysis should determine those questions' level of intensity, that is, the applied audiovisual politeness. We should not equate the act of lobbing the interviewee an easy question during a listening shot with that of putting him on the spot with a politically compromising question.

Table 4. Candidate/listening shot

	$L_{(n)S}$ Mean		Sig.
	NO	YES	
Mariano Rajoy	1.1	1.1	.426
Pedro Sánchez	1	2.2	.014
Pablo Iglesias	1.2	2.4	.048
Albert Rivera	1.33	0.66	.586

Using a bivariate correlation analysis and crossing the data from question intensity with listening shot questions as a politeness model, we can determine what if any significant relationship exists between those questions and the level of politeness (see Table 4). In other words, we can determine if the candidates faced their questions—some of which were posed during listening shots—on a level playing field. Pearson's $R_{(x-y)}$ (from -1 to 1) yielded disparate results in which the Podemos and PSOE candidates had greater correlations.

As seen in Table 5, there are notable differences in the correlations between question intensity and the use of listening shot questions. Though we don't find a positive correlation for Rivera ($r[12] = -.48, p < .114$), the analysis for Sánchez and Iglesias shows highly significant correlations at ($r[16] = .828, p < .000$) y ($r[18] = .66, p < .000$) respectively. Lastly, the correlation for the prime minister was weak and had only marginal significance ($r[23] = -.405, p < .055$).

We should point out that r values less than 0 respond to an inverse relationship. "The sign of the correlation coefficient is positive when there is a direct relationship between two variables, that is, as X increases, so does Y . If the sign is negative, the correlation between the two variables is inverse. That is, as X increases, Y decreases (Igartua, 2006: 516). Given these statistical suppositions, we can state that listening shots of the candidate $L_{(n)} S$ are employed less frequently in the more intense questions posed to Rivera and Rajoy, (-.480) and (.405), respectively. The same cannot be said for Sánchez and Iglesias. As questions increased in intensity, the use of listening shots also increased.

Regarding the narrative tool of split-screen, Sánchez saw a strong correlation ($r[11] = .468, p < .000$), whereas Rivera's and Iglesias's were weaker at ($r[5] = .058, p < .000$) and ($r[12] = .042, p < .000$), respectively, and Rajoy saw a negative correlation at ($r[8] = -.470, p < .000$). Supporting video with the interviewee's voice sounding off-camera as a tool to bolster or undermine his argument has a highly significant relationship with Pablo Iglesias ($r[9] = .361, p < .000$), as well as Mariano Rajoy ($r[10] = -.665, p < .000$), though the latter is inverse. Sánchez and Rivera also have negative correlations in this aspect, at ($r[3] = .415, p < .000$) and ($r[7] = -.784, p < .000$), respectively. The crawls favoured only Mariano Rajoy ($r[9] = -.410, p < .000$) and undermined Pablo Iglesias's discourse ($r[6] = .321, p < .000$).

Table 5. Question intensity/listening shot question

	$Q_{(n)}LS$	$Q_{(n)}SS$	$Q_{(n)}SV$	$Q_{(n)}C$
$Q_{(n)}I$ Mariano Rajoy	-.405	-.470	-.665**	-.410
$Q_{(n)}I$ Pedro Sánchez	.828**	.468*	.415	.223
$Q_{(n)}I$ Pablo Iglesias	.661**	.042	.361**	.321*
$Q_{(n)}I$ Albert Rivera	-.480	.058	-.784	.152

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

6. Conclusions and discussion

The foundation of democratic societies is a well-informed citizenry that has access to truthful political information on a level playing field. Television is still the medium most people use to get information, and it is here where the largest democratic public sphere arises. Televised debate's most important contribution to democracy is perhaps that it has brought the fragmented conversations of the interpersonal public sphere to unconnected audiences, and to those who claim to represent them.

In both public and private television programming slots—generalist or not—we are witnessing the consolidation of infotainment programs that "no longer impact the viewing public through names or statistics or unique, quality content, but rather by resorting to

drama, emotions and fiction,” (Carrillo, 2013:37). Nonetheless, “the presence of political leaders on such programs has an effect on that is especially important when the messages being transmitted are political,” (Taniguchi, 2011). The television appearances analysed in this study reflect a classic political interview format in a news environment, despite the occasional personal topic and at times relaxed tone.

This quantitative analysis-based exploratory research was designed to describe and explain the use of audiovisual politeness to then analyse how the audiovisual discourse is built and discover if the treatment during the interview undermined or bolstered the discourse of the candidates for prime minister.

In the four analysed interviews, we found audiovisual narratives directed by the program's producers both in which politeness abounded and was non-existent. The most notable technique was the use of listening shots, panning to the candidates while the interviewer posed highly controversial, political questions.

In answering H₁, with the data obtained and the inherent limitations of this type of methodology, we can confirm that, despite similar filming locations and staging, the audiovisual treatment afforded to the candidates is not homogeneous. The production responds to a clear intent to present interviewer and interviewee in a certain light, though determining why audiovisual courtesy is extended or not goes beyond the scope of this paper, despite suspicions that the narrative may be in keeping with the channel's editorial line.

Regarding the possibility of differing treatment of candidates (RQ₁), we found that the Ciudadanos and PP candidates received a more favourable audiovisual treatment both in terms of production and question intensity. The Podemos and PSOE candidates found themselves in more compromising situations in terms of audiovisual discourse and faced more intense questions.

It seems certain that television audience figures and votes have no real correlation. Case in point, compare the shares obtained by the candidates during their interviews with *Telecinco's* Pedro Piqueras with their electoral results: Mariano Rajoy (16.6% share vs 28.71% of votes; Pedro Sánchez (18.1% share vs 22.01% of votes); Pablo Iglesias (17.8% share vs 12.69% of votes); and Albert Rivera (17.3% share vs 13.94% of votes). The data show that whereas the emergent parties' shares outpaced the votes they garnered in the general elections, the traditional parties fared better in the elections despite their lower TV ratings.

Audiovisual courtesy as seen in production is a new concept that should be further studied so as to determine the limits of its scientific efficacy, especially in terms of its effect on the processes of audience persuasion. The way candidates are presented in prime time and the audiovisual strategy accompanying their discourse undoubtedly play a fundamental role in how the viewer perceives them. The blow of a challenging question can be softened if it is shot with the interviewer on the screen. If, on the contrary, the question is shot during a close-up on the interviewee, any expression of rebuke, discomfort or scepticism can interfere with his political response, which is consequently deemed somewhat untruthful.

In our review of political communication literature, we found no academic studies or empirical data on the audiovisual discourse constructed in the interviews of political candidates, how such interviews are shaped in terms of television production and whether the use of audiovisual courtesy strategies like those seen in this paper has conditioned their development. Researchers should take our results with preliminary caution and try to ascertain in future studies any possible correlations between the audiovisual treatment afforded the interviewee and its effect on voters. Inasmuch as immediate effects are concerned, researchers would also do well to determine if viewers' perception in terms of persuasion and empathy is conditioned by the morphology adopted in audiovisual politeness strategies.

References

- Bargiela Chiappini, F. (2003). Face and politeness: New (insights) for old (concepts). *Journal of Pragmatics* 35(10), 1453–1469.
- Berrocal, S., Abad, L., Cebrián, E., & Pedreira, E. (2003). El infoentretenimiento televisivo. Las elecciones legislativas de 2000. In S. Berrocal (coord), *Comunicación Política en Televisión y Nuevos Medios*. Barcelona: Ariel.
- Bolin, G. (2014). Television Journalism, Politics, and Entertainment: Power and Autonomy in the Field of Television Journalism. *Television & New Media* 15(4) 336–349.
- Brenes Peña, E. (2012). Género, discurso político y descortesía verbal: análisis de la influencia de la variante sexo en el Parlamento Andaluz. *Philologia hispalensis* (26), 59–77.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carrillo, N. (2013). El género–tendencia del infoentretenimiento: definición, características y vías de estudio. In C. Ferré-Pavia (Ed.), *Infoentretenimiento. El formato imparable de la era del espectáculo*. Barcelona: UOC.
- Charaudeau, P. (2012). Problemas teóricos y metodológicos en los estudios de la oralidad aplicados a la cortesía: aspectos lingüísticos, pragmáticos y discursivos. In J. Escamilla Morales & G. Henry Vega (eds.), *Miradas multidisciplinares a los estudios de cortesía y descortesía en el mundo hispánico* (pp- 13–32). Barranquilla: Universidad del Atlántico.
- Clayman, S. E., Elliott, M. N., Heritage, J., & McDonald, L. L. (2006). Historical trends in questioning presidents, 1953–2000. *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36(4), 561–583.
- Christie, C. (2002). Politeness and the linguistic construction of gender in parliament: An analysis of transgressions and apology behavior. *Working Papers on the Web*, 3.
- Cortés, L., & Bañón, A. M. (1997). *Comentario lingüístico de textos orales II. El debate y la entrevista*. Madrid: Arco/Libros.
- Cuenca, M. J. (2013). Uso del vocativo en la entrevista política: género discursivo y (des)cortesía. *Discurso & Sociedad* (3), 522–552.
- Escandell Vidal, M. V. (1998). Politeness: A relevant issue for relevance theory. *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses* (11), 45–57.
- Ferguson, C. A. (1976). The structure and use of politeness formulas. *Language in Society* 5(02), 137–151.
- Fraser, B. (1990). Perspectives on politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics* 14(2), 219–236.
- Fetzer, A., & Weizman, E. (2006). Political discourse as mediated and public discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics* (38), 143–153.
- Fetzer, A., & Bull, P. (2008). Well, I answer it by simply inviting you to look at the evidence. The strategic use of pronouns in political interviews. *Journal of Language and Politics* (712), 271–289.
- Fuentes Rodríguez, C. (2006). ¿Cortesía o descortesía? La imagen del entrevistado vs. La imagen del entrevistador. *Cultura, lenguaje y representación* (3), 73–88.
- Garcés Conejos Blitvich, P. (2010). A gender approach to the study of im-politeness. *International Review of Pragmatics* (2), 46–94.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Garden City: Doubleday.
- Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*, Garden City: Anchor Books.
- Goldsmith, D. J. (2007). Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. In B. B. Whaley & W. Samter (eds.), *Explaining Communication: Contemporary Theories and Exemplars*. (pp. 243–262). Mahwah: Erlbaum.
- Goldsmith, D. J. (2008). Politeness theory. In L. A. Baxter & D. O. Braithwaite (eds.), *Engaging Theories in Interpersonal* (pp. 255–269). California: Sage.

- Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics: Speech Acts*, Vol. III (pp. 41-58). New York: Academic Press.
- Heffelfinger Nieves, C. R. (2014). Cortesía y construcción de género en 10 entrevistas políticas de la televisión puertorriqueña. *Diálogo de la Lengua*, (6), 95-115.
- Heritage, J., & Greatbatch, D. (1991). On the Institutional Character of Institutional Talk: The Case of News Interview Interaction. In D. Boden & D. H. Zimmerman (Eds.), *Talk and Social Structure* (pp. 93-137). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hirsch, R., (1989). *Argumentation, Information, and Interaction: Studies in Face-to-face Interactive Argumentation Under Differing Turn-taking Conditions*. Gothenburg Monographs in Linguistics 7. Department of Linguistics: University of Göteborg.
- Igartua, J.J. (2006). *Métodos cuantitativos de investigación en comunicación*. Barcelona: Editorial Bosch.
- Lakoff, R. (1973). The logic of politeness, or minding your P's and Q's. *Proceedings of the Ninth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*, 345-356.
- Leech, G.N. (1983). *Pragmatics*. London, New York: Longman.
- Muñoz-Alonso, A., & Rospir, J.I. (1999). *Democracia mediática y campañas electorales*. Barcelona: Ariel Comunicación.
- Muñoz-Alonso, A., & Rospir, J.I. (1995). *Comunicación política*. Madrid: Editorial Universitas.
- Mullany, L. (2002). I don't think you want me to get a word in edgeways do you John?: Re-assessing (im)politeness, language and gender in political broadcast interviews. *Working Papers on the Web* 3(1).
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2002). *The content analysis guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sartori, G. (1997). *Homo Videns. La sociedad teledirigida*. Madrid: Taurus.
- Tanaka, L. (2004). *Gender, Language and Culture: A Study of Japanese Television Interview Discourse*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Tanaka, L. (2009). Communicative stances in Japanese interviews: Gender differences in formal Interactions. *Language & Communication* 29(4), 366-382.
- Taniguchi, M. (2011). The electoral consequences of candidate appearances on soft news programs. *Political Communication* (28), 67-86.