

Argumentative Analysis of the Electoral Debates in the Campaign 28-A: the Construction of the Enemy

Análisis argumentativo de los debates electorales en la campaña 28-A: la construcción del enemigo

Miljana Micovic. Superior Next Education Center. Spain.

m.micovic@cesnext.com

[CV]  

Adrià Alsina Leal. Universitat de Vic- Central University of Catalonia. Spain.

adria.alsina@uvic.cat

[CV] 

Inmaculada Anaya Revuelta. University of Vigo. Spain.

ianaya@uvigo.es

[CV]  

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Verbal aggressiveness and attack strategy towards the rival have been two of the main characteristics of political speeches during the April 2019 Spanish national election campaign. **Methodology:** This paper analyses the two only TV debates, which were held on April 22 (RTVE) and April 23 (Atresmedia), using a linguistic and pragmatic approach. The objective is to identify, through discourse analysis, the argumentative strategies that the four leaders of the parties invited to use to define and construct the enemy. **Results and conclusions:** Analysis of their speeches shows that Pedro Sánchez (PSOE), Pablo Casado (PP), Albert Rivera (Ciudadanos) and Pablo Iglesias (Unidas Podemos) create frames and develop their arguments to reinforce the image of their adversaries as enemies of Spain. The four candidates use numerous linguistic and rhetorical resources and pragmatic mechanisms of linguistic (im)politeness.

KEYWORDS: political discourse; argumentation; debate; linguistic (im)politeness.

RESUMEN

Introducción: La agresividad verbal y la estrategia de ataque han caracterizado los discursos políticos de la campaña electoral para las elecciones generales en España, celebradas el 28 de abril de 2019. **Metodología:** En este trabajo analizamos los dos debates electorales, celebrados el 22 de abril (RTVE) y el 23 de abril (Atresmedia), desde un punto de vista lingüístico y pragmático. El objetivo es identificar, a través de análisis de discurso, las estrategias argumentativas que utilizan los cuatro líderes de los partidos invitados a los debates para definir y construir al enemigo. **Resultados y conclusiones:** El análisis de sus intervenciones demuestra que Pedro Sánchez (PSOE), Pablo Casado (PP), Albert Rivera (Ciudadanos) y Pablo Iglesias (Unidas Podemos) coinciden en crear marcos conceptuales y elaborar su argumentación para reforzar la imagen del adversario como enemigo de España. Los candidatos utilizan numerosos recursos lingüísticos y retóricos, y mecanismos pragmáticos de la (des)cortesía lingüística.

PALABRAS CLAVE: discurso político; argumentación; debate; (des)cortesía lingüística.

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Translation by **Paula González** (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela).

1. Introduction

The analysis of televised electoral debates has received great attention since its appearance. In recent decades, numerous studies have been conducted, from different points of view. The objective of this research is to carry out the argumentative analysis of the candidates' discourse in the two electoral debates between the leaders of the four parties with the greatest parliamentary representation: Pedro Sánchez of the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE)*, Pablo Casado of the *Partido Popular (PP)*, Albert Rivera of *Ciudadanos (C's)*, and Pablo Iglesias of *Unidas Podemos*. The first debate entitled "Four-way debate" was held on April 22nd on RTVE. The moderator was TVE journalist Xabier Fortes. The second meeting, organized by Atresmedia and titled "The decisive debate", on April 23rd. The moderators on this occasion were the journalists of Atresmedia Ana Pastor and Vicente Vallés.

In a context of great uncertainty about the results of the elections, the debates became very important. The number of undecideds, according to the barometer of the Center for Sociological Research (CIS by its acronym in Spanish), published on April 9th, 2019, amounted to 41.6%¹. The impact of the debate on the electorate is discussed and, although the polls are not entirely reliable in this regard, a good or bad performance in a debate is shown to influence citizens' votes.

Aware of this importance, the candidates, in addition to dismantling the political project of the rival, strive to give a negative image of the adversary. To do this, they use verbal aggression and attack strategy. Besides, the language is an instrument of great power that, well used, can become the sharpest weapon in the electoral contest.

¹ "The CIS gives a comfortable victory to the PSOE, which doubles the PP in seats on 28-A", an article published in *El País*, April 9th, 2019, retrieved from: https://elpais.com/politica/2019/04/09/actualidad/1554791390_073854.html

1.1. Theoretical framework

In the last decades, studies of political discourse analysis in electoral debates have proliferated in Spain (Fuentes, 2010; Blas Arroyo, 2011; Micovic, 2014; Fernández García, 2017; Anaya and Micovic, 2019, among others).

Goffman (1974) introduces the concept of ‘frame’ in the social and communication sciences, researching interpersonal interactions. According to this author, any experience or social activity can be viewed from several “frames”. From cognitive linguistics, Lakoff (2004, 2009) re-elaborates the notion of Goffman's ‘frame’ and defines ‘conceptual frame’ as a set of “mental structures that draw the way we see the world”. These structures shape our worldview, our ideas, actions, and judgments (Lakoff, 2004, p. 15). The frames are the basis for the formation of public opinion and, according to that, politicians try to impose the vision of a certain situation, for which they use a language that conveys ideas favorable to their positions. On the contrary, to refer to the rival, they use a language impregnated with negative meaning.

Specifically, the 28-A campaign was a negative campaign, that is, it was based on highlighting the adversaries’ defects (ideas, political positions, the person’s aspects, and private behaviors), rather than on highlighting the virtues of the candidates, parties, proposals or political positions (García Beaudoux, D’Adamo, and Slavinsky, 2005). This strategy is not new. The construction of the enemy, of the “other” (*us vs. them*)², goes back to antiquity, as Fernández Lagunilla (1999, p. 40) states, “the political enunciation seems inseparable from the construction of an adversary, so much so that, in politics, if there is no adversary, it must be manufactured”.

As for the current political discourse, Montolío (2019, p. 75) highlights the increase in verbal conflict and emotional arguments in politicians' interventions, noting that “verbal aggression against the adversary is a fallacy to create noise with the appearance of an argument”. According to the linguist, the *ad hominem* argument³, “is one of the best examples of what Cicero called emotional fallacies, passionate overflows with argument format, but empty of useful content for debate” (Montolío, 2019, p. 75).

Regarding the argumentative typology, this analysis is based on the argumentation theory of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958). We cannot delve into their argumentative schemes, but we do identify some of the types of arguments defined by these theorists. To build and reinforce the argument of the rival as an enemy, political leaders use the argument of overcoming, the argument by analogy or metaphor, the hyperbole, the irony, the argument based on the dissociation of the notions (philosophical couple “appearance-reality”), the *ad personam* argument, and the emotional argument.

Likewise, the election of the lexicon with negative connotations to refer to the rival (Morales and Prego, 2002) and the use of the “vote of fear” are intended to cause uncertainty and fear in voters; its objective is to warn about the disastrous consequences if the other wins.

For his part, Solanilla (2019, p. 7) warns of the presence of a “war language” and underlines that these two debates were “a disappointing show of confrontation of ideas, projects, and people”.

² The construction of the “other” has been studied from the perspective of Critical Speech Analysis (ACD by its acronym in Spanish) (Fairclough, 1995, Wodak, 2000; Van Dijk, 2005, 2008, among others) in which the relationship between the speech and the ideology is researched.

³ In the Theory of argumentation, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958) call this type of argument *ad personam* argument. In the present study, we use this denomination.

For the pragmatic comment of the analysis of the debates under study in this work, we start from the scheme designed by Cortés (1991, 2008)⁴, according to which there are two levels: “the level of external variation or contextual condition factors” and “the level of internal variation or semiotic-linguistic condition factors”, which is what has served us to comment on some aspects of the linguistic level, such as the use of personal pronouns, the presence of speech markers, etc. At the level of discursive mechanisms, we highlight some such as the use of enumeration, the structure of phrases, and the use of metaphor.

Also, from the pragmatic perspective, we study the use of (de)courtesy strategies with argumentative function. Within the formal tone demanded by the debates, in those held in this campaign, a particular behavior of verbal aggression develops, in which disagreement and criticism are permanently present (Fernández García, 2017)⁵. Among the mechanisms used, the accusation of lying is one of the most frequently used and contributes to the creation of the image of the opponent as an enemy of the country, one of the toughest attacks against the image of the rival.

2. Methodology

To carry out the argumentative analysis of the candidates' discourse in the two electoral debates, we have used the audiovisual corpus formed by the “Four-way debate” (RTVE), dated April 22nd, 2019, and “The decisive debate” (Atresmedia), of April 23rd, 2019. The videos of both debates are entirely available on the internet⁶.

In the case of the debate on RTVE, there is also the full transcript of the debate on the same webpage where the video is located. However, the debate held at Atresmedia does not have a transcript, so it has been necessary to do the transcription corresponding to the interventions of each candidate, considered relevant for this study. The examples of the first debate provided in the analysis in section 3 are indicated with (D-1), and those of the second, with (D-2).

First, to identify the linguistic arguments and resources used in the debate to build the enemy, the two debates have been visualized in their entirety and all the four candidates' interventions in which it is argued that the political adversary is the enemy of Spain and the Spaniards, have been selected.

The analysis has consisted of three phases:

- A. First, we have identified and described the cognitive frames established by each candidate. The goal of this phase has been to verify that each of the frames corresponds to the construction of a specific enemy. The formulation of the frames is not extracted from the candidates' discourse, but we have summarized the main frames to cover a wide range of arguments used to support them. The maximum number of frames built by the candidates has been three.

⁴ At the level of internal variation, Luis Cortés (2008) includes everything related to linguistic forms and mechanisms aimed at achieving the discursive effects intended by the speaker. He explains that he had two study options: separate the sections by topic and analyze the text in a block, or segment the text into three parts and analyze how the themes are presented in each of them. In this work, we only point out some of the linguistic and pragmatic resources used in the two debates.

⁵ According to the Functional Theory of Benoit (2002), attacks or criticisms of the opponent are one of the three basic functions that candidates use in debates to demonstrate the limitations or weaknesses of the opponent. Fernández García (2017) also indicates that two essential discursive functions of the political debate are attack and defense.

⁶ The RTVE debate, available here: <http://www.rtve.es/alicarta/videos/especiales-informativos/especial-informativo-debate-cuatro/5159816/>

El debate de Atresmedia, disponible aquí: https://www.atresplayer.com/noticias/el-debate-de-atresmedia/2019/23a-el-debate-decisivo_5cbf7c277ed1a8b0f55ba826/

- B. Second, the arguments used by each of the candidates that serve them to build the enemy have been identified and these arguments have been distributed within each of the established frames. The objective of this phase has been to determine the typology of the arguments used.
- C. Finally, through a detailed analysis, linguistic and rhetorical resources have been recognized, as well as the pragmatic mechanisms used by politicians to persuade the electorate that their rival is a threat to the country and citizens. The objective of this phase has been, above all, to identify the resources and mechanisms with the most recurrent argumentative function in the discourse of each candidate. Taking into account the meaning that these elements have from a theoretical point of view (for example, the meaning that different scholars of the subject have given to the discourse markers), we analyze the value of each element, starting from the meaning they have in the context in which they appear, regardless of what they mean from a theoretical point of view.

The examples, very numerous in this work, are the basis from which the whole study starts. This methodology allows us to reach, in our opinion, reliable conclusions about the candidates' behavior, since, from their interventions- the examples- we build what we could qualify as the argumentation and the result of the different positions.

3. Results

From their first interventions, the leaders of the four parties begin to build the enemy, to delimit their adversaries. With this objective, they focus on defining and differentiating themselves from the rival. Next, we analyze how each candidate directs his criticism towards the others and what linguistic resources he uses to carry out his argument.

3.1. Pedro Sánchez (PSOE)

The main enemy in his speech is *the right*. This noun refers, on occasions, to the previous governments of the *Partido Popular*, to the three parties that he presents as a block of the right, PP, C's, and VOX, or to the two parties whose representatives participate in the debate (PP and C's). To address the VOX party, Sánchez uses the *extreme right* noun, thus avoiding mentioning the name of the party.

One of the frames that Sánchez creates is: "The right is morally bad and prevents the development of the country". In the example (1), this candidate uses irony (*small details, evil socialists*) to delegitimize the management of the previous PP government. He uses the argument of dissociation of the notions to talk about the *two stories*, that of the PP and that of the PSOE, through which Sánchez intends to convince the public that he is the one who knows the reality of the country, and his rivals are far from it:

- (1) In this debate you will hear *two stories*⁷, one is the one that *the right* tells every day; according to them, Spain was doing wonderfully well until the *evil socialists* filed a motion of censure. (...) There were indeed *some details* that were overlooked, for example, two illegal referendums, (...) a devastating sentence against the corruption of the *Partido Popular*, but,

⁷ Italics will be used in the examples to highlight the strategies and mechanisms discussed in the analysis.

except for these *small details*, for the *Spanish right* everything was going wonderfully well in our country. (D-1)

The way to begin his intervention, announcing “the two stories” of Spain, is an example of how Sánchez employs, to differentiate himself from the opposition party (the PP), one of the most effective discursive mechanisms: enumeration, textual operation by which the candidate presents his intervention as a coherent whole. It is debatable whether it is most appropriate or not to start an intervention, such as that of Pedro Sánchez in this debate, with an enumeration, since it can subtract some emotion from the exhibition. However, in this case, the division into two stories helps the interlocutors to understand the dichotomy between them, and to remember the message.

Sanchez's argument about the corruption of the PP and its lack of credibility belong to the same frame. In examples (2) and (3), the politician uses the metaphor to discredit the rival party:

(2) The headquarters of the *Partido Popular* on Génova Street in Madrid was like the great bazaar of corruption. One went to the first floor, irregular financing. The second floor, illicit enrichment. Third floor, distribution of envelopes with money in B or bonuses. On the fourth floor, coordinating, the patriotic police; and on the fifth floor, the Pasadena agency, led by Francisco Correa, the leader of the Gürtel plot. (D-1)

(3) (...) but if we go to the Valencian community (...) there are three former presidents of the Valencian Community prosecuted or charged or involved in corruption cases; thirteen counselors, I mean, there in Valencia, it is not that there was a great bazaar of corruption, what there was, was a theme park of corruption. (D-2)

Within the same framework, Sanchez reinforces the idea with the argument of overcoming, indicating that the opposition, formed by the PP and C's, is an obstacle for the prosperity of the country:

(4) We have done this, unfortunately, with the opposition of the *two rights*, here present, with *parliamentary blockades that have prevented* the debate and the approval of parliamentary initiatives for the social majority of this country. (D-1)

At other times, criticism is directed at politicians, people, and their behaviors. This criticism is reinforced with another of the linguistic mechanisms most used by the four candidates: the use of discursive connectors, as *of course* and *besides* (5). The *of course* connector reinforces the argumentative sense of what has been previously said; the connector *besides* denotes that the arguments are not ordered in an arbitrary manner (Montolío, 2001) since the argument that follows this marker generally highlights the idea considered most relevant to transmit the message.

(5) *Of course*, one sees the proposals of a fiscal revolution that *mister Casado or the right* say and, *of course*, sees them deeply *unfair* and, *besides*, deeply *irresponsible*. (D-1)

In other examples, in addition to the use of connectors as *well*, in this case with conclusive value, rhetorical resources are also used, such as puns, based on the opposition of contraries (*truths/lies*):

(6) *Well, one* is already accustomed to these *lies*, to the *falsehoods*, to the hyperbolic disqualifications of *the right*, of *mister Casado*, of *mister Rivera*. Instead of a *lie* detector, we will have to put a *truth* detector, to see if they tell any *truth*. (D-1)

(7) Here *lies* fly between *mister Casado* and *mister Rivera*, and here they are indistinct, (...) they are becoming more and more and more like the *extreme right*. (D-2)

(8) I have not agreed with the independentists, ever. That it is *false* (...) and, therefore, *you* [Rivera] may repeat a *lie* a thousand times, but it is *false*. *False is false*. No is no and never is never. (D-2)

In the examples (6), (7) and (8) the words *lie*, *falsehood*, *false* have also been indicated in italics since Sanchez resorts to the strategy of discouragement of the accusation of lying to reinforce his argument. The lie is presented as a common characteristic to the enemy, formulated as *right*, *extreme right*, or, in a personalized way in the candidates. Besides, in example (8) we observe the use of tautology (*no is no, false is false*), very recurrent in political discourse, as Montolío (2019) also points out.

Sanchez groups the three parties of the right within another framework: “The extreme right is a great danger for Spain and, if it adds up with the other two rights, they will govern together”. In example (9) it is worth pointing out another concept that Sánchez uses to designate the enemy: *the Columbus’ trio*⁸. Besides, in examples (10) and (11), this politician uses the “vote of fear” strategy, pointing out the *risk* that the three right-wing parties win. On the linguistic level, the repeated use of the form *I* (10), as opposed to the form *one*, in the third person, used in example (6), personalizes the message, distances it from the “other” (the rival) and confers a sense of authority and credibility (Leanne, 2009):

(9) On April 28th, we Spaniards are called to decide which country we want, if we want a Spain in which we all fit or a Spain in which only *the Columbus’ trio* fits. (D-2)

(10) (...) they will have mister Casado as president, mister Rivera as a companion in some ministry, and the extreme right at the commanding charges. And, notice, I think that this is a *very dangerous* reality that we have to avoid, (...) I thought that in Andalusia they were not going to agree, *Ciudadanos*, the *Partido Popular*, and the extreme right, but they have agreed. (D-1)

⁸ The concept comes from the demonstration in the Plaza de Colón in Madrid, on February 10th, 2019, convened by the three parties as a protest against Sánchez, his negotiations with the independentists, and to support the unity of Spain.

(11) There is a risk that these two [Rivera and Casado] add up with the absent extreme right. The extreme right is dangerous, it is scary, it says things concerning this issue: “A raped woman has no right to abort,” LGTBI groups generate more and more children that belong to that group. That speaks of “the licentious women of the extreme left” and that considers that the true dictatorship has not been the Francoist, but the feminist. (D-2)

Finally, Sánchez creates a frame to place Catalan independence as a threat to Spanish citizens, at the same level as the right. Thus, example (12) reinforces the idea that the independence, but also every party, except the PSOE and *Unidas Podemos*, are enemies of the Spaniards:

(12) We are in early elections on April 28th because the independence, the PP, and *Ciudadanos* voted against some budgets that we and *Unidas Podemos* had agreed upon. (D-2)

As for *Unidas Podemos*, Sanchez does not direct any criticism towards this formation; rather, there are an explicit thanks for supporting his policies:

(13) And in this I want to be clear and grateful, *Unidas Podemos* and mister Iglesias have supported it and I want to publicly thank them. (D-1)

3.2. Pablo Casado (PP)

The first frame that Casado creates is: “Pedro Sánchez is a traitor for his association with independentists and *etarras*”. In it, the leader of the PP relates the alleged violence of the independentist “coup d’etat” with the terrorist violence of ETA. In the selected examples, Casado makes arguments that support these frames. This is a series of criticisms of Sánchez, given that his objective is to raise the electoral contest between his project (*the only alternative*) and that of Sánchez. In his interest to reinforce his ideas, he uses the repetition of syntactic structures, preceded in this case by the adverb *perhaps*, which attenuates the statement and gives a moderate tone to his words:

(14) Nine months ago there was a PP government in Spain (...) that had taken the *coup plotters* of Puigdemont to the bench (...) *Maybe that's why* mister Torra and mister Otegi supported the censure motion that Pedro Sánchez presented, and *perhaps that's why* they said this week that they would support him again, if they add up, after these general elections. (...) [the PP] is the *only alternative* present in this set. (D-1)

(15) The unity of Spain is at risk because of the socialist government of Pedro Sánchez; it is very simple to say, those who want to *break* Spain have Sanchez as their favorite candidate. (D-1)

Casado makes use of the metaphor several times. In example (16), Sánchez is a *matrioska*, a Russian doll that contains identical ones and- this is the interesting thing in the association of ideas- of a smaller size. The more original and successful this association is, the greater the impact on the recipient and the greater, therefore, its endurance in the mind of the listener. Thus, according to this metaphor, Sánchez encompasses *Podemos*, *Esquerra Republicana*, *JuntsxCat*, and even *Bildu*:

(16) The problem is that mister Sanchez has become a *Russian doll*, a *matrioska*, inside him is *Podemos*, *Esquerra Republicana*, *JuntsxCat*, and also *Bildu*. (D-2)

The leader of the PP accuses Sánchez of being a traitor, even with his party (17), and, for this, it uses the accusation of lying (18):

(17) That he will pardon them, that he already has the roadmap, that he wants to revalidate that Frankenstein Government, as Rubalcaba says, with independentists, *batasunos*, with those of *Podemos*, and, above all, betraying the democratic history of the PSOE (D-1)

(18) I now remember Felipe González when he said in an interview: “With Pedro Sánchez, he's telling you something and you know he's lying to you at the same time”. (D-1)

But the personalized attacks on Sánchez are not only formulated respecting the unity of Spain but also regarding his policies, as in example (19), in which Casado uses irony:

(19) Every time mister Sánchez opens his mouth, bread, diesel, and light go up. We Spaniards *are indebted* to mister Sánchez. (D-2)

The leader of the PP uses the *ad personam* argument and the hyperbole, aimed at questioning Sanchez's suitability as a candidate for the presidency of the Government:

(20) Honestly, it is the *height of humiliation* and you, sincerely mister Sánchez, *do not measure up* as President of the Government. (D-1)

(21) You are the *most radical* president of *all democracy*. (D-2)

(22) You are now a *public danger* for Spain. (D-2)

The following frame that Casado creates attacks, not the candidate Sánchez, but his party: “Socialism and the left are enemies of Spain”:

(23) I want to address those Spaniards who remember in their flesh and very recently, how in the government of mister Rodríguez Zapatero, 3.5 million went to the streets, (...) with the vote of Deputy Sanchez, too, (...) to also cover the social services that others have put at risk, not only in the current government, but also in the previous one of Zapatero, and in one of the 90s, of mister González. (D-1)

(24) (...) social spending, which with the *Partido Popular* government increased 26,000 million euros to start with, for the ravages caused by the economic crisis of *the left*. (D-1)

(25) The *Partido Socialista* has never created employment, mister Felipe González from the year 1982 to the year 1996 *created zero net jobs*. (D-2)

Finally, this candidate also declares who is not his enemy, as can be seen in the following intervention, answered by Rivera:

(26) Casado: I believe, mister Rivera, that neither your voters nor mine understand your accusations and your attacks on me (...) because *you are not my adversary*.

- Rivera: *Neither are you*. (D-1)

3.3. Albert Rivera (C's)

The main frame that Rivera creates coincides with the first frame created by Casado: “Pedro Sánchez is a traitor because he is an accomplice of nationalists and separatists”. Within the frame, he also defines Catalan independence as “coup plotters”. In his first intervention, the leader of *Ciudadanos* aggressively attacks and launches very serious reproaches against Sánchez, which cover several areas of his mandate; he concludes with the criticism of his management on the Catalan issue:

(27) Mister Sánchez is not satisfied with placing by finger the president of *Televisión Española*; he has done it in Correos, he has done it by manipulating the *CIS*, he has done it by placing friends and plugged people in public companies, up to 500 charges. But now he wants to pardon, too; he has the word “pardon” on his forehead to pardon his separatist partners who have made a *coup*. (D-1)

In both debates, Rivera makes arguments within that framework. In example (28), this politician uses hyperbole, in (29) and (30) he resorts to emotional argumentation, metaphor (silence) and repetition; in (31) he uses the accusation of lying. He frequently uses two verbs with a strong connotative charge, *break* (‘separate with violence’, ‘smash’) and a synonym for this, *shatter*.

(28) You are the *highest defender of nationalist policies*, that’s why you represent them here in this debate. (D-1)

(29) Spain hurts, it hurts me that Catalonia *breaks* because I am also Catalan. Mister Sánchez does not care, Mister Sánchez can sit with Mister Torra and take a picture of 21 conditions of shame, put a mediator, and whatever it takes to remain in power. (D-1)

(30) Do you hear it? It is *the silence, the silence* that chilled the blood of millions of Spaniards when the separatists wanted to *break* our country in Catalonia, [...] It is the complicit *silence* of Pedro Sánchez. (D-1)

(31) Mister Sánchez *has lied*, he said he has not agreed with the separatists. (D-2)

Rivera expresses that Sanchez's “accomplices” are also Bildu and its leader; for this purpose, he uses a lexicon with a strong semantic load of negative connotation:

(32) Mister Otegui has offered one million votes to vote for Mister Sánchez. Sanchez is *the candidate of the terrorist Otegui*, of Bildu. (...) wants to agree with those who want to *shatter* Spain. (D-2)

Through the use of the metaphor in example (33), Rivera points out that *Unidas Podemos* is Sánchez's partner and warns of the damages that this coalition can cause to the Spanish economy:

(33) If mister Iglesias comes as Minister and Vice President of mister Sánchez, *grab your wallet* because they are going to go to the bag. (...)they are going to *put their hand in the citizens' wallets*. (D-1)

Faced with all these “enemies of Spain” and “the betrayal of Sanchez”, the candidate of *Ciudadanos* introduces the concept of a *national emergency* with which he intends to reinforce his main argument about the seriousness of the situation for the country. This idea is repeated in both debates:

(34) It is a *national emergency* to send mister Sánchez, the separatists, and mister Iglesias to the opposition, and form a constitutionalist government (...) it is a *national emergency* to send him to the opposition. (D-1)

Among the attacks on Sánchez, are those formulated by Rivera as personal criticism, through the *ad personam* argument and the accusation of lying:

(35) Mr. Sánchez, you are the one about the *lie thesis*, don't say... don't talk about lies, that you have a *lie thesis*, that you have been caught. (D-1)

The leader of *Ciudadanos*, on occasion, transfers his criticism to the entire *Partido Socialista*:

(36) The Socialist Party, if only you could see it now, a party that called for equality in the 80s and today is the nationalists' tool. (D-1)

In this sense, to criticize traditional parties and bipartisanship, Rivera establishes another frame: “The old parties (PSOE and PP) have done (absolutely) nothing in the past 40 years”. To designate the enemy, in this case, he uses the *blue and red* formula, or (*the old*) *left and right*, among others:

(37) The reality is that I listen to the speeches of *the old left and right* and stay in *the last century, left and right fighting*, but without proposals. (D-1)

(38) (...) to end this debate of “and you more” of *blues and reds*, and *reds and blues*, which does not take us anywhere. (D-2)

(39) The PP and the PSOE have spent 40 years without agreeing to education. (...) without doing anything except leading us to *failure*. (D-2)

Finally, even when he affirms that the leader of the PP is not his adversary, intending to differentiate himself from him, Rivera formulates some criticism and places the rival party within the frame of the old parties that face a very serious problem, corruption:

(40) [Mister Casado] Do you know where the economic miracle of the *Partido Popular* is? In jail.

Even so, the C's candidate makes it clear that the PP is a possible ally, and therefore, is not his enemy:

(41) I reach out to the PP because I insist, I think we are two parties that can form the government coalition. (D-2)

3.4. Pablo Iglesias (*Unidas Podemos*)

The argumentation in the discourse of Iglesias, in the two debates, is based on a frame in which “good” and “bad” are also faced: the “bad” are those of “above” (economic and political powers) and the “good” those of “below” (the citizens), defended by him and his party.

Iglesias does not define the political rivals present on the television set as enemies, but describes a conflict that goes beyond creating the following framework: “The privileged and corrupt minority of great economic powers leverages their ties to the government to maintain privileges”. Therefore, Iglesias builds a powerful enemy against unprotected citizens and presents the political parties of his adversaries as defenders of that privileged minority through corruption⁹.

In examples (42), (43) and (44) Iglesias defends that this minority is made up of banks, large multinationals, vulture funds, energy companies, and the media that, according to him, are at the service of the privileged. In his arguments, he uses different resources aimed at achieving greater expressive force: repetitions, negative words, metaphor, etc.

(42) We say that it is a *shame* that banks do not pay in practice Corporation Tax in this country; (...) it cannot be that working people always pay taxes and that there is a *minority of privileged people* who do not make that effort. (D-1)

(43) It is legal for ministers and former presidents to end up in energy business administration councils, but that is corruption. Those companies are *buying politicians*. (D-2)

⁹ “Anti-elitism” in political speech is one of the main characteristics of populist discourse, according to Reinemann *et al.* (2016). Arroyas and Pérez (2016), among others, study populism in Pablo Iglesias' speech.

(44) *It is true that* the owners of the media have more power than the deputies. *It is true that* the banks of Spain *bent their arm* to the Supreme Court. *It is true that* energy companies *buy politicians* by taking them to business administration councils, and *it is true that sewers* [10] will continue to work so that we are not in a government. (D-2)

In example (45) Iglesias affirms that the problem of politics in Spain is corruption; he points out that the “true enemy” is corruption:

(45) A very strong expression has been used: the enemies of Spain. The enemies of Spain are those that privatize public heritage, the enemies of Spain are the corrupt. (D-2)

Another framework that Iglesias creates in the debates is that “The old parties, the PP and the PSOE, do not fulfill what they promise”:

(46) This article of the Constitution is not fulfilled, and for it to be fulfilled, very simple things must be done, the first one, to end the temporality scam. (D-1)

On the other hand, Iglesias warns Sánchez that he did not fulfill what he promised in his previous agreements:

(47) I have to remind you that some of the things that you promised to do, you did not; you did not publish the list of tax amnesties (...). (D-1)

Regarding the post-election pacts, Iglesias sees it possible to agree with the PSOE, but not if they agree with *Ciudadanos*. In this sense, he shows his doubts about Sanchez's lack of response to this question:

(48) But I would like you to clarify at once your electors if you are willing to carry out an agreement with *Ciudadanos*. (D-1)

Finally, Iglesias proposes a “re-frame” (Lakoff, 2004) about how Spain is defined, reinterpreting a foreign concept and changing the frame defended by other parties:

(49) I think some wrap themselves in the Spain flag, those who like Spain because Spain is not only what we saw in the Plaza de Colón, which is very respectable. But Spain is more things. Many Spaniards do not like bullfights, many Spaniards identify with different symbols. Many Spaniards speak different languages (...). (D-2)

3.5. Comparative analysis of the results

The results obtained in the comparative analysis show that the four candidates use very similar resources in the elaboration of their speeches; These resources are aimed at attacking the enemy and trying to surprise the public. Table 1 shows the most characteristic features of how each of the candidates intervenes from the point of view of speech analysis. Unlike the way to debate at other times in Spain or, even, unlike how it is discussed today in other parts of the world, the fundamental

objective in the case of the four politicians is to undermine the other and get the voter excited. We can observe in the analysis that certain types of arguments, rhetorical, linguistic, and pragmatic resources are repeated in case of different candidates, and are frequent in the speeches of the electoral debates, as well as in the political discourse, in general.

Table 1. *Argumentative strategies, discursive mechanisms, rhetorical and linguistic resources used by each candidate.*

	Pedro Sánchez (PSOE)	Pablo Casado (PP)	Albert Rivera (C's)	Pablo Iglesias (Unidas Podemos)
Arguments	The argument of the dissociation of notions to talk about two stories The argument of overcoming "Vote of Fear"	The argument <i>ad personam</i> Aggressive attacks on Sánchez	The argument of an emotional nature Argument <i>ad personam</i> Aggressive attacks on Sánchez	The argument of opposites
Discursive mechanisms	Enumeration Use of discursive connectors as of course, besides, and well Accusation of lying	Accusation of lying Discursive markers, such as the mitigating <i>perhaps</i>	Accusation of lying	Use of markers aimed at highlighting defaults by Sánchez, such as the connector <i>but</i>
Rhetorical resources	Irony Metaphor Opposition of rivals Tautology	Metaphor Irony Hyperbole	Hyperbole Metaphor Repetition of words	Metaphor Repeating syntactic structures at the beginning of sentences
Linguistic resources	Use of the personal pronoun <i>I</i> to personalize the message against the use of <i>one</i> in the third person singular Word order altered to get emphasis Colloquial expressions	Repeating syntactic structures	Use of lexicon with a large negative semantic load: <i>break, shatter, terrorist</i> . Abundant colloquial expressions: <i>and you more, if only you could see it now</i> , etc. The contrast between <i>blue and red/ red and blue</i> concepts.	Frequent use of negative words to describe reality Repeating syntactic structures to emphasize his message

Source: self-made.

Likewise, in table 2 we offer a summary of the main frames used by each candidate, as well as the enemies that each one builds in his speech. It can be seen that, regarding the construction of the enemy, there are certain coincidences between different candidates. In the first place, both Casado and Rivera identify Pedro Sánchez as an enemy, along with the nationalists and independentists ("coup plotters"). They formulate for this the main almost identical frames. On the other hand, Rivera and Iglesias, as leaders of the "new parties", refer to the "old parties" as enemies of Spain for their bad management in the past.

Table 2. Summary of the frames and enemies that each candidate builds.

Pedro Sánchez (PSOE)		Pablo Casado (PP)		Albert Rivera (C's)		Pablo Iglesias (Unidas Podemos)	
Enemy	The right The extreme right Independence	Enemy	Pedro Sanchez Nationalists / independentists / coup plotters / Podemos The left	Enemy	Pedro Sanchez Nationalists / independentists / coup plotters The old parties	Enemy	The above/ the privileged/ the corrupt The old parties
Frame	“The right is morally bad and prevents the development of the country”. “The extreme right is a great danger for Spain and, if it adds up with the other two rights, they will rule together”. “Catalan independence is a threat to Spanish citizens”.	Frame	“Pedro Sánchez is a traitor for his association with independentists and etarras”. “Socialism and the left are enemies of Spain”.	Frame	“Pedro Sánchez is a traitor because he is an accomplice of nationalists and separatists”. “The alliance of the enemies of Spain has created a national emergency”. “The old parties (PSOE and PP) have done (absolutely) nothing in the past 40 years”.	Frame	“We defend the good (those below) against the bad (those above)”. “The old parties, the PP and the PSOE, do not fulfill what they promise”.

Source: self-made.

4. Discussion and conclusions

In the April 2019 elections, the expected growth of *Ciudadanos*, *Podemos*, and *Vox*, alternative options to PSOE and PP, the two big traditional parties, together with the growing tension due to the political crisis in Catalonia, influenced the discursive construction of antagonistic and confronted blocks: the left *versus* the right, the “defenders of Spain” *versus* the “enemies of Spain”. Constant appeals to this alleged relationship of the “other” with violent behavior have also contributed.

In the analysis of the two debates, Pedro Sánchez of the PSOE focuses on attacking Casado (PP) and Rivera (C’S); He doesn't attack Iglesias so much (UP), with whom he still hoped to agree. Casado and Rivera, on the other hand, direct the harshest criticisms to Sánchez, who is really the target to tear down, and somewhat less, to Iglesias who, in turn, uses a more moderate tone and defines an enemy, rather collective, reflected in the great economic powers related to politicians.

To demonstrate the superiority of their proposals and defeat their adversaries in debates and elections, candidates create frameworks that define and delimit who their enemy is, but, above all, who is the enemy of Spain and the Spaniards. According to Lakoff's model, politicians develop frameworks with which they intend to dismantle the political proposal of the “other” and the trajectory of the party and demonstrate the (in)ability of the adversary to govern.

Each one presents himself and his party as the only alternative to fight the enemy and defend the “good” if they win in the next electoral contest. The four also make clear who could be their possible ally in the post-election pacts, and who, not.

All this is reflected in their use of language, characterized by expressive intonation, the use of markers, rhetorical figures (metaphor, hyperbole, irony), the structure of phrases, enumerations, resources all aimed to convey with emphasis the ideas and the main arguments of the candidates. On the other hand, there are large coincidences in the procedures used by each of them, in general; in particular, Casado and Rivera create the same frames to present Sanchez as the country's main enemy. From the study carried out, it follows that they coincide in the use of metaphors, similar syntactic structures, and, even, the use of the same verb (*break*), referred to Spain, as shown in examples (14) (Casado) and (28) and (29) (Rivera).

In conclusion, to create and reinforce these ideas in the mind of the voter, the four candidates generate different types of arguments, most of them, empty of content, but with a strong emotional charge. Unlike what happened in the debates of the 90s, now what prevails are emotions. The personal attack formulated through the *ad personam* argument, the choice of the lexicon with negative connotations to refer to the rival (Iglesias: *people are not idiots*; Rivera: *Mister Sanchez wants to tease the Spaniards*), the already mentioned use of rhetorical figures, as well as the impolite strategy of the accusation of lying, are the resources used to impress and convince the electorate.

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AUTHORS:

Miljana Micovic

Doctor from the University of Barcelona in the field of political communication and discourse. She is Head of Studies and professor at the Superior Next Education Center in Madrid (Spain). She worked for seven years as an Academic Coordinator and professor of Next International Business School in Madrid. She has been an invited professor of debate and political discourse in numerous masters in Spain. She is a member of the Board of Directors of ACOP (Association of Political Communication), is part of the EDAP research group (Academic and Professional Speech Studies) as a professional collaborating member. Her line of research is focused on the analysis of political discourse, in general, and on electoral debates, in particular.

m.micovic@cesnext.com

H-index: 1

Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1944-6446>

Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=MXtTY9kAAAAJ&hl=es&oi=ao>

Adrià Alsina Leal

Ph.D. in Political Communication from the Central University of Catalonia (UVic - UCC) and associate professor of International Journalism and Global Communication Strategies at this university. He has also taught at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and La Sorbonne in Paris. He began his professional career as a journalist for several media in Barcelona, including the public television network TV3. He has worked as a correspondent in Barcelona for media such as Postimees of Estonia. He has been a communication consultant for the IFC-World Bank Group, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). He was head of communication of the Catalan National Assembly (ANC) between 2016 and 2018. His H is 0 (December 2019).

adria.alsina@uvic.cat

Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3984-9453>

Inmaculada Anaya Revuelta

Doctor and Extraordinary Award from the Complutense University of Madrid. Full Professor of Spanish Language at the University of Vigo since 1999. Since November 2015, Vice Dean of Academic Organization. She directed Evágora, a communication consultancy for companies and institutions. In 2004, she was named Partner of the Galicia Businessmen's Circle (CFV). She directed and coordinated the *Master's Degree in Language and Communication in business*. She teaches in the Department of Spanish Language in different degrees. She has published, in different high impact journals, studies focused on discourse analysis and on various aspects of the language. Develops extensive work in training for companies and institutions as an expert in communication. In the last 10 years, she has taught courses and workshops, among others, in the following organizations: Institute of Business Communication (ICE by its acronym in Spanish); P&A Consultancy and Training S. L; Vigo Business School; ALDESA (Madrid); FENOSA (Bilbao), TSOLAR (Madrid), etc. She participates as a researcher in the project "Televised electoral debates in Spain: models, process, diagnosis and response", financed by the Ministry of Economy, Industry, and Competitiveness. Her Index H is 4 (December 2019).

ianaya@uvigo.es

H-index: 4

Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1883-4922>

Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=r88j4V0AAAAJ&hl=es&oi=ao>