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We're not being rude, are we?: impolite uses of 1st person plural forms

1st person plural forms are generally considered to be less face-threatening, since they include the speaker in their ways to address the interlocutor. In this paper, I will use evidence from Spanish political discourse to show that there are various types of impolite uses of 1st person plural forms, and I will analyse the mechanisms for the 'conversion' of polite uses of 1st person plural forms into impoliteness strategies.

Indeed, as a result of the interpretation of inclusive 1st person plurals as less face-threatening, these plurals allow for critiques which seem too face-threatening if construed with a 2nd person form, thus facilitating the expression of potentially impolite contents, e.g. *We ought to be more careful..*

Furthermore, 1st person plural forms may also be used – politely – with a reference to 2nd person plural forms (excluding the speaker), e.g. in teacher-pupil relationships (*We're going to be quiet now.*). When applying these uses in inappropriate contexts, for instance among adults of equal status, the construction becomes yet another instance of impolite 1st person plural use.

In my presentation, I will analyse these uses taking into account both internal linguistic factors and extra-linguistic aspects of the relationship between speaker and addressee.