

## **Name-calling in Greek YouTube comments**

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### **Abstract**

Recently, research in pragmatics has turned to the analysis of online impoliteness in light of the growing importance of computer-mediated communication and the prevalence of online aggression in such contexts. However, although name-calling and other impoliteness strategies have been examined in various languages, similar research in Greek is still scarce. Therefore, this paper focuses on the functions of name-calling in the comments' section of a Greek YouTube political video. Using Culpeper's framework for analysing impoliteness and Ljung's schema for the themes of name-calling (slightly modified to address this specific dataset), I examine the themes and the internal structure of name-calling constructions found in this context along with their creative aspect. Findings suggest that the themes of name-calling vary according to the (un)specificity of the addressee. It is also evident that the political orientation of the poster critically influences the name-calling choices. Regarding the internal structure of name-calling constructions, these share certain features with English name-calling, while also having idiosyncratic traits, the most important of which being the presence of the particle 're'. The study also confirms that, in online contexts, name-calling can easily be combined with other positive and negative impoliteness strategies and can be highly creative and original.

**Key words:** *Impoliteness; Name-calling; Political Discourse; Youtube; Computer-Mediated Communication.*

## **Introduction**

Although politeness theories have long been part of pragmatics (e.g. Leech 1983 and Brown & Levinson 1987), only recently scholars have started showing interest in impoliteness phenomena (e.g. Culpeper, 1996, Bousfield, 2008). Impoliteness is now acknowledged as a separate section of pragmatics research and an autonomous area of language use meant to serve specific purposes. It is no longer considered a taboo that would better stay unexamined (Culpeper, 2011).

Lately, research has turned to impoliteness in online environments due to the growing impact of computer-mediated communication (CMC) on modern-day interactions and to the increased levels of impoliteness noted in online contexts. More specifically, researchers have investigated whether face-to-face impoliteness strategies are transferred online or whether new, medium-specific ways of ‘doing’ impoliteness are created. As shown by studies such as those by Locher (2010) and Lorenzo-Dus et al. (2011), offline ways of being impolite are creatively reproduced in various online platforms, while new impoliteness phenomena, such as flaming or trolling, have also developed.

The purpose of this paper is to examine name-calling in Greek YouTube comments through an analysis of the comments on a political video. I choose to focus on this area since online impoliteness, and specifically name-calling, have not received adequate attention in Greek linguistics.

The first part of this paper provides the necessary theoretical background on impoliteness. I present Culpeper’s and Ljung’s frameworks on impoliteness and swearing respectively, which are applied on the data. I also refer to the triggers of online impoliteness, specifically addressing impoliteness on YouTube, and to creativity in online impoliteness. Afterwards, I focus on data choice and collection, and on the methodology applied. This part is followed by the analysis, which is undertaken and is presented in two stages. Initially, I examine the themes, the forms and the internal structure of the instances of name-calling found in the dataset. I also look at the relationship between the chosen theme and the specificity of the addressee. Then I deal with the co-occurrence of name-calling with other impoliteness strategies and with online creativity in name-calling. The final section is devoted to the conclusions drawn from my analysis, while also containing suggestions for further studies in relevant areas.

## Literature Review

### Impoliteness

Various theories have dealt with politeness and the strategies used by interlocutors to maintain social harmony (Culpeper, 1996) and preserve face. The notion of 'face', defined by Goffman (1967, p.5) as "an image of self-delineated in terms of approved social attributes", is separated by Brown and Levinson (1987) into positive and negative face. The former involves the need to feel accepted, included and liked, whereas the latter is related to the need to act without being imposed upon (Culpeper, 2009a). While Brown and Levinson focus on ways to minimize the danger to either the speaker's or the hearer's face when performing a Face Threatening Act (FTA), Culpeper (1996) suggests that, in certain cases, the speaker intends to damage the face of the hearer instead of preserving it. He therefore defines "genuine" impoliteness as

a negative attitude towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social organisation, including, in particular, how one person's or a group's identities are mediated by others in interaction. Situated behaviours are viewed negatively-considered impolite-when they conflict with how one expects them to be (...). Such behaviours always have or are presumed to have emotional consequences for at least one participant, that is, they cause or are presumed to cause offence. Various factors can exacerbate how offensive an impolite behaviour is taken to be, including for example whether one understands a behaviour to be strongly intentional or not (2011, p. 23).

Culpeper (1996) develops a framework for impoliteness, comprised of five superstrategies that could be considered the impoliteness counterparts of Brown and Levinson's strategies. Each one of these contains a number of output strategies. The first strategy is bald-on record impoliteness, where the FTA is performed clearly and directly. Then Culpeper distinguishes between positive impoliteness, involving strategies targeting the addressee's positive face<sup>1</sup>, and negative impoliteness, which includes strategies meant to damage the negative face of the addressee<sup>2</sup>. Sarcasm or mock politeness is the next strategy comprised in the model. In this case, although polite structures might be employed, the

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<sup>1</sup> Ignore/snub the other, disassociate, use inappropriate identity markers, seek disagreement, call the other names, use taboo words

<sup>2</sup> Frighten/threaten, condescend/scorn/ ridicule, explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect, dismiss /silence the other.

hearer's true intention is to be impolite. The last strategy presented by Culpeper is the withholding of politeness, in which case politeness strategies are not used despite being expected.

This article focuses on positive impoliteness and, more specifically, on the substrategies of name-calling and use of taboo words. This specific focus is justified by the prevalence of positive impoliteness strategies in online contexts, such as YouTube, as noted by Lorenzo-Dus et al. (2011) and Blitvich (2010). Therefore, I wish to investigate whether this type of positive impoliteness prevails in Greek YouTube videos as well.

By name-calling, Culpeper (2011) refers to the use of 'derogatory nominations' or insults. He presents four subtypes of this strategy: the use of personalised negative vocatives, assertions, references and third person negative references in the hearing of the target (Culpeper, 2009b). The use of taboo words includes swearing and profane or abusive language (Culpeper, 1996). However, according to Ljung (2011), name-calling, including the use of epithets (evaluative words meant to express negative opinions), is a subcategory of swearing. Although Ljung (ibid.) focuses on expletive epithets (those epithets with a non-metaphorical sense that are used metaphorically when swearing) as swearwords, other studies (e.g. Hughes, 2006) include both expletives and non-expletives within the broader category of name-calling, and it is this broadened notion of name-calling is adopted here. According to Ljung, epithets, apart from performing various stand-alone functions (among which name-calling), can also be used as slot-fillers. In this case epithets function as adverbial/adjectival intensifiers of a main, stand-alone swearword. A common structure for English insults, as noted by Culpeper (2009b), is 'you-intensifier-vocative-you'.

Finally, Ljung (2011) elaborates on the various themes that are typically used in name-calling, in various languages. Among the main ones are the mother's theme (insults related to someone's mother), the sex-organ theme, the sexual activities theme (which for the purposes of this paper will also include Ljung's sodomy theme), the animal theme, and the filth theme.

## **Impoliteness in online communication**

### ***What triggers online impoliteness?***

CMC is often considered to be one of the contexts where impoliteness thrives (Hardaker, 2010), and various reasons have been suggested to explain the prevalence of impoliteness. Firstly, it can be attributed to certain inherent features of CMC. In online

communication, there is lack of social contextual cues (cues-filtered-out approach), which are features related to the speaker's profile (e.g. age, gender, social/academic background) or to the conversation itself (paralinguistic and extralinguistic features). These could help define both the speaker's identity and the conversation's meaning, and could influence the general understanding of the hearer. In CMC, these traits are absent both from the side of the speaker and from the side of the addressee. Consequently, on the one hand, the speaker's belief that s/he remains anonymous and that his/her true offline identity cannot be traced, creates a loss of self, leading to de-individuation phenomena. Moreover, this anonymity can create a sense of freedom and impunity that liberates the speaker from the obligation to abide to politeness norms (Arendholz, 2013).

On the other hand, the lack of social contextual cues dissolves any sense of immediate audience. The other users are perceived as vague and distant and, as a result, the speaker's attention is usually on the message itself and not on the possible reactions or emotional stress that the words will enforce on the addressee (ibid). This increases the possibility for more insensitive, impolite remarks, leading to what Kiesler et al. (1984, p.1129) call "uninhibited verbal behaviour". Impoliteness is also fanned by the ever-changing and unstable nature of the audience in online environments. As the construction of a message is shaped by the specific audience to which it is addressed, the unspecificity and the anonymity of the audience can inhibit the use of politeness (Graham, 2007).

De-individuation and anonymity also have various other effects. The de-individuation process sets personal characteristics aside, meaning that the sense of belonging to a certain group or community is reinforced, leading to polarization. Polarization is a common trigger of impoliteness and can incite attacks on people's social face, directed mainly towards out-groups. Thus, apart from countering personal attacks, users tend to defend members of the group with which their affinity lies. (Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2011).

Regarding anonymity, its importance is reinforced by the power gap observed in CMC. As Culpeper (1996) states, in relationships where the participants are not equally powerful, the most powerful participant can be more explicitly impolite or can obstruct other participants from countering verbal attacks. When relationships are equal though, no participant can instantly gain the upper hand in the conversation. CMC is a characteristic example of such an equal relationship. Since any source that would guarantee the speaker power in the off-line world remains unknown, power in CMC can be acquired discursively.

The person who succeeds in imposing their views on the others controls the conversation (Dynel, 2012). A usual way to “p'wn”<sup>3</sup> the other is by being impolite or abusive (Pihlaja, 2012).

Finally, according to Culpeper, the norms of politeness are negotiated and mutually agreed between the members of a specific community. As Mills (2005) mentions though, there are certain communities, such as those online, whose traits make impoliteness more normative than politeness. Therefore, when impolite behavior is common and expected, impolite remarks unacceptable in other contexts are not perceived as extremely impolite (Culpeper, 2011). However, even when expected, impolite behavior can still be recognized as such, as indicated by the fact that people on its receiving end tend to strike back, a sign that they have taken offence (Dynel, 2012).

### ***Impoliteness on YouTube***

The above mentioned causes for impoliteness can be identified in the online community of YouTube and, combined with the platform's idiosyncratic traits, they make it notorious for intense disagreements and widespread impolite remarks (Bou-Franch & Blitvitch, 2014). Firstly, anonymity, as described before, is reinforced in a YouTube context. Users are only known by a username, and can choose not to offer any personal information. Even if they do provide details about themselves, though, it is very easy to give false information or to create a fake profile (Dynel, 2012).

Additionally, YouTube is a community, where “netiquette” – or rules for politic online behavior (Yus 2011) – is not strictly adhered to. The YouTube community guidelines specifically call for respect of other users and their different opinions, and announce low tolerance to threats or abuses. However, these guidelines usually remain theoretical suggestions. The diverse topics featured in YouTube videos, as well as the diverse backgrounds of the comment section's users (Moor et al., 2010), usually lead to the rise of aggression and the development of hate speech. Furthermore, most YouTube sequences are polylogal and not dyadic, involving various users in a conversation (Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2011). This means that the responses are disassociated (Dynel, 2012), which can easily lead to misunderstandings and increased impoliteness.

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<sup>3</sup> In “netlingo” to 'pwn' means to dominate the conversation, to get the last word

### ***Online impoliteness and creativity***

Impoliteness is often underestimated linguistically. There is a common belief that impolite expressions are readily made, uninspired and depict a marginalized form of language (Culpeper, 2011). It is true that a large part of impoliteness, is formulaic. However, in certain contexts, an impolite expression can highly creative and sophisticated.

Online contexts offer a great environment for creative impoliteness to thrive. The time lag between the messages in online contexts gives the user the necessary time to contemplate on their response (Arendholz, 2013). The absence of the pressure and the lack of spontaneity and, possibly, of the emotional distress related to face-to-face disagreements, allows the posters to fully exploit the possibilities offered by language. This creates non-conventional impolite expressions, such as those that will be analysed below.

### **Political context relevant to the analysis**

Since the 2012 Greek elections, and in the light of the 2008 economic crisis, Greece has seen an unprecedented rise of the extreme-right party Golden Dawn (GD), which is currently the third more powerful party in the parliament (Ellinas, 2013). The far-right party is widely criticized for its extreme views and practices, while some of its prominent members have been accused for involvement in criminal activities. The heated debate between the supporters and condemners of GD revolves around the party's legal grounds and beliefs. The party's supporters are commonly perceived as people of low intellect within Greek society due to their support for such extreme world-views. This is due to the widespread belief among Greek voters, which is also supported by the media and the results of various surveys (Laskaratos, 2012), that GD's voters are people of low educational background. Such a conclusion is also supported by Lubber's et al. (2002) research about the profile of extreme-right voters throughout Europe.

Greek political debates are notorious for quickly *escalating* (Kakava, 2002), and since YouTube can be considered a forum for exchanges of political views (Blitvich, 2010), the aforementioned debate now also takes place in comments of YouTube videos related to GD. The high levels of impoliteness in online contexts (see 2.2.1 and 2.2.2) combined with the controversial issues raised in such videos means that comments are usually rife with impoliteness.

## Data and Methods

The data were collected from the comment section of a YouTube video presenting a parliamentary speech of Ilias Kasidiaris, an MP of GD. Apart from the large number of impolite contributions found in the comments (see 2.3), this video was chosen due to its popularity as reflected in number of views, which ensured a wide range of participants. The reason for the video's popularity also impacted on its choice as a data source. This video was widespread and largely criticized in 2012 because it presents Ilias Kasidiaris attacking Evaggelos Venizelos, the president of PASOK, which was participating in the coalition governing the country. The attack is so intense that he even uses the words "Shut up", a silencer unacceptable for the context of a parliamentary debate. The mere content of the video is relevant to this paper, as it presents Ilias Kasidiaris using negative impoliteness. It was therefore hypothesized that a video which itself is highly impolite could provide data with increased impoliteness, which indeed proved to be the case.

In terms of methodology, I analysed a total of 40 instances of name-calling, found in a hundred comments from the comments' section, made within one year's time. The number of comments examined was large, since not all of them included positive impoliteness or epithets. After spotting the epithets, I translated them into English. In certain cases I offer two translations. The first one is the literal one, while the second is the one that would be used in English to express a similar insult. This is because not all languages have the same lexicalized insults, and a swearword of one language might be uncommon or even nonexistent in a different cultural context, or may be expressed in a completely different way (Ljung, 2011).

After translating the epithets, I proceeded to a double categorization. Firstly, I categorized them according to whether they are directed towards specific users or towards the people featured in the video (namely Ilias Kasidiaris, the speaker, and Evangelos Venizelos, the person to which the talk is addressed) or towards an unspecified addressee. This distinction is based on Dalton's (2013) observation that people can use epithets without an apparent trigger, or without referring to someone specifically. Since YouTube commentaries are visible to larger audiences, which do not comprise only the people actively participating in the conversation but also lurkers (see Goffman's 1981 distinction between ratified recipients and overhearing audiences), users can resort to uninstigated swearing (Dalton,



2013) in order to be provocative. This is done in the hope that someone will perceive the underlying insult as referring to them (i.e. will attribute intentionality) and will react, possibly inciting a flamewar, an extended online argument involving disagreement and verbal hostility (Perelmutter, 2011, p. 75).

Secondly, I categorized the epithets using Ljung's name-calling themes. However, I had to broaden the existing themes in the taxonomy (mother, sex-organ, sexual activities, animal, filth) to accommodate epithets related to the intellect, political beliefs and nationality themes, as well to what I called the vagrancy/barbarism theme. All of the aforementioned themes were present in the data.

Then I combined the two categorizations to show which themes are preferred when name-calling is directed towards a specified addressee and which are favored when the addressee stays unspecified. At the same time, I quantified the results to allow for more objective and generalizable conclusions. When quantifying, I grouped together all instances where a given theme is used, irrespective of whether it is featured in a stand-alone epithet or in a slot-filler. The quantified results will be presented in Table 1, in the next section, while a full list of all the epithets found in the dataset, categorised in terms of addressee's (un)specificity can be found in Appendix A.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Name-calling themes and (un)specificity of addressee**

Of the nine themes of name-calling (see section 3), the first five are also included in Ljung's typology. Of the four not found, the three first (intellect, political beliefs, nationality) are probably absent because Ljung considers only expletive epithets in his taxonomy and not epithets in general. The last category not found in Ljung, the vagrancy/barbarism theme, has an extensive presence in the data (12.5%, as can be seen from the above table) and can be treated as an idiosyncratic theme of personalized negative vocatives in Greek. Since family and the sense of belonging are really important in a positive politeness community such as Greece (Sifianou, 1999), calling someone a vagrant, meaning that he is depleted of the morals provided to a person by his family, and that he has adopted a street culture, can be considered a severe insult. Barbarism is also related to the absence of the morals and norms of a modern community, and barbarism insults have similar connotations as those related to vagrancy.

However, barbarism insults could also be connected to the intellect theme, as calling someone a caveman is related to restricted mental abilities.

Table 1: Number of epithets (stand-alone epithets and slot-fillers) in the dataset

	<b>Specified Addressee</b>	<b>Unspecified Addressee</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>The mother theme</b>	2	0	2	5
<b>The sexual organ theme</b>	1	1	2	5
<b>The sexual activities theme</b>	5	0	5	12.5
<b>The animal theme</b>	5	1	6	15
<b>The filth theme</b>	0	2	2	5
<b>The intellect/severity theme</b>	4	4	8	20
<b>The political beliefs theme</b>	3	3	6	15
<b>The nationality theme</b>	2	2	4	10
<b>The vagrancy/barbarism theme</b>	4	1	5	12.5
	26 or 65%	14 or 35%	40	

When the addressee is known, the most common insults (stand-alone epithets and slot-fillers) originate from the animal and sexual activities themes (5 instances each), closely followed by the vagrancy/barbarism and the intellect/severity themes (4 instances each).

However, it is more interesting to examine the themes featured in insulting unspecified addressees. When the addressee remains unspecified, epithets (stand-alone epithets and slot-fillers) used in name-calling are mainly aggregated from the intellect theme (4 instances), followed by the political beliefs theme (3 instances) and the nationality and filth themes (2 instances each).

The extensive presence of the political beliefs theme can be easily explained if we consider the lack of individuality discussed in 2.2. In cases of swearing not directed to a specified addressee, the speaker has seemingly no reason to be impolite, and cannot easily resort to swearing which attacks a specific trait of the unknown interlocutor (Bou-Franch, 2014). Insults coming from the mother theme and the sex organ theme, for instance, are more

personal, and certainly more taboo (Ljung, 2011). They are to be more expected either when addressing a certain person, or when countering impoliteness. On the other hand, insults that are related to one's political beliefs can be used without a specific trigger and without a specified addressee. The insult in this case is directed towards the social, and not the personal face of participants. It is their belonging to a group that triggers the impolite attack, as their group identity is rejected/criticized by the poster. Moreover, in this case, the insult is not restricted to those actively participating in the conversation. It is directed to all those that share the extreme ideologies of the person featured in the video, to all the "fascists" in general. Vocatives related to fascism are the most typical realisation of the political beliefs theme in the data.

The occurrence of the intellect theme is related to the political beliefs theme. All of the occurrences of the intellect theme are generally addressed from anti-fascists to whoever may support the same political views as Ilias Kasidiaris. The commenters therefore seem to associate low intellect with low educational background and to consider restricted mental abilities as the only sound explanation for supporting racist and ethnicist ideologies (see 2.3). Thus, it is expected that the anti-fascist comments coincide with name-calling targeted to the addressee's lack of intelligence. Moreover, the anti-fascist discourse that extreme-right voters are a social pariah and a shame to the nation is depicted in the occurrences of the filth theme and the nationality theme, that are also used by anti-fascist posters.

It is striking that in my data set, those supporting the extreme-right do not generally refer to unspecified addressees. There is only one stand-alone epithet used by extreme-right posters for unspecified addressing, featuring the sexual organ theme (cunts<sup>4</sup>). Therefore extreme-right voters seem to prefer personalized impoliteness and not attacks to group identities. On the one hand, this can be attributed to the fact that the whole spectrum of Greek political parties (and consequently their supporters) are opposed to GD, therefore it is hard for extreme-right voters to figure out in which political group their critics belong, so as to attack their social/group face. On the other hand, the preference for personalised insults might be related to the background of GD supporters, where a macho culture and a tendency for personally targeting those opposed to the party is prevalent (Ellinas, 2013).

Finally, it should be underlined that the aforementioned themes of intellect and political beliefs are also common (4 and 3 instances respectively) when the addressee is specified. We

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<sup>4</sup> mounia

can therefore conclude that the political orientation and the subsequent criticisms of voters' intellect are the preferred way of the 'antifascist' posters to be impolite in the context of this political video, irrespectively of whether the direction of the comment is neutral or not. These two themes account for 15% and 20% of the total name-calling used, respectively.

### **Forms and internal structure of name-calling constructions**

Regarding the forms of name-calling, there are two categories in the data that coincide with Culpeper's (2009b) structures for English: personalized negative vocatives and assertions. The third category found, rhetorical questions including an insult (e.g. "are you a wanker?"<sup>5</sup>), although not included in Culpeper's (2011) schema, can be related to his challenging/unpalatable questions. The speaker implies that the answer to the question is positive (the question equals an affirmative), however the addressee would never give a positive answer or any direct answer whatsoever (in the data such questions are either countered with another type of impoliteness or ignored) as this would seriously damage his face.

Similarly, some comments are to be made about the structure of each category. Regarding personalized negative vocatives, there are three possible structures. Firstly, we can have a standalone epithet. I should mention at this point that, in Greek, augmentatives (e.g. *poust-ara*-you big fag) and diminutives (e.g. *Ellin-akia*- little Greeks) are attached to the word, usually as a suffix. Such suffixes are common when the epithet is used by itself, the former to maximize the insult and the second one to harm the negative face of the addressee along with the positive one, by belittling him.

Secondly, the epithet can be enhanced by an intensifier. The intensifiers found in the data are mainly epithets themselves, coming from the intellect (brainless<sup>6</sup>), the political beliefs (neonazist<sup>7</sup>) or the nationality themes (Greek-hating<sup>8</sup>). There is also one case where the adjective "big"<sup>9</sup> is used as an augmentative, separated from the word.

Lastly, there is a structure idiosyncratic in Greek, where we find the interjection "re", combined with an epithet. In the dataset "re" is the most common particle initiating a name-

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<sup>5</sup> eisai malakas?

<sup>6</sup> anegkefaloi

<sup>7</sup> neonazistika

<sup>8</sup> anthelliniko

<sup>9</sup> megalo

calling construction and is preferred by the interlocutors. "Re" is the shortened form of "more", used to call someone an idiot in Ancient Greek. Initially "re" was considered an insult in modern Greek too. However, it gradually lost its impolite connotations and became a term of endearment (Ntiliou, 2010). When combined with negative vocatives, though, it re-acquires a negative sense (though not its initial one) and mainly functions to identify the insult (in English it would equal the use of *you* in a structure like "you asshole").

Coming to rhetorical questions and assertions, they both use the verb "to be" in the second person, singular or plural (*eisai/eiste*-you are), followed by the epithet. The difference is in the use of the question or the affirmative form respectively (e.g. "are you a fag?/you are traitors of the nation"<sup>10</sup>).

### **Name-calling and other strategies**

A close look at the data makes clear that the positive impoliteness strategy of name-calling is combined with other strategies, both positive and negative as well as with sarcasm, to enhance the effect on the addressee (Bousfield, 2008). Impoliteness strategies are combined both in the immediate co-text of a vocative and in the wider context.

When considering the immediate co-text, we find in the data the vocative "dear ethnicist"<sup>11</sup> and the assertion "you are a big sheep *my brother*"<sup>12</sup>. In both cases the epithet is combined with a positive politeness marker, indicating respect/liking and closeness/brotherhood respectively. However, it is clear that these identity markers are inappropriate in this context and therefore the politeness here is mock politeness or sarcasm (Culpeper, 1996).

The combination of impoliteness strategies in a wider context can be illustrated via the following comment by the user *kostasmr* in response to the user *HYGROPYR*, which, due to length restrictions, is presented here directly translated into English (for the original Greek comment see Appendix B).

I hope God won't let me see you guys being in power. I saw what you did in Auschwitz and Dachau. Go kill yourself goat! How dare you reply to Julie P?. Cow!

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<sup>10</sup> *eisai poustis?/eiste ethnoprodotos*

<sup>11</sup> "agapite" *ethnikisti*

<sup>12</sup> *eisai megalo provato "aderfe mou"*

Firstly, we note that the use of two personalised negative vocatives, both featuring the animal theme (goat, cow). This theme is often used when addressing women, as part of the sexist discourses objectifying females (Talbot, 2010). The second animal vocative is closing the comment. The first one is combined with a negative politeness strategy, an unfriendly suggestion/ ill-wish, and a rather extreme one (go kill yourself). Moreover, in the beginning of the comment, the poster disassociates himself from the addressee (positive impoliteness), and in the second sentence he explicitly associates the supporters of GD with a negative aspect (negative impoliteness), namely with Hitler and Nazi practices. Additionally, certain more general observations on online impoliteness are relevant when analyzing this comment. Firstly, this comment is part of a ‘flame-war’, where various posters get involved and take sides defending one or another user (here, kostasmr defends the user Julie P., who had earlier posted an anti-GD comment, by replying to HYGROPYR, her attacker.) A typical characteristic of flaming, a specific realization of online impoliteness, is its tendency to escalate, both within various users’ responses and within the same response (Perelmutter, 2011). In this comment, the impoliteness strategies used become more numerous and much more intense towards the end of the comment (even name-calling escalates, with two animal insults close to each other).

### **Impoliteness and linguistic creativity**

In the data there are instances of complex and rare swear words that one would not expect to find in a Greek offline disagreement (brainless barbarians<sup>13</sup> neonazist sediments<sup>14</sup>, caveman<sup>15</sup>). Additionally, there are expressions that, apart from being verbally creatively, are also complicated syntactically. A good example is the structure "*malakismeno katsiki pou milas ellinika*" (wanking Greek-speaking goat), which in Greek includes a noun, a determiner/intensifier, and a subordinate relative clause that completes the insult. Such a complex and uncommon term of address coincides with what Culpeper (2011) calls pattern reform.

At this point, I should note that linguistic creativity online can also be related to intentionality (ibid). Since it is rather unlikely such complicated forms to occur without

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<sup>13</sup> anegkefaloι troglodites

<sup>14</sup> neonazistika kathizimata

<sup>15</sup> anthrope ton spilaion

previous thinking and design, it is also unlikely that people can be unintentionally impolite in CMC, acting on impulse.

## Conclusions

One of the main findings of this research is that Ljung's taxonomy for the themes of name-calling, although partially suitable for the present analysis, had to be expanded to fully account for name-calling in Greek YouTube. The addition of the vagrancy/barbarism theme is very important, since it seems to be idiosyncratic to Greek society, depicting its moral values. The addition of the intellect, political beliefs and nationality themes appears to be necessary in the context of YouTube postings related to the far-right, as these themes make up 45% of the name-calling found and are mainly used by the anti-fascist posters to belittle the mental abilities of the fascist posters and condemn their ideology. In total, the four themes added to Ljung's taxonomy account for 57.5% of all name-calling instances in the dataset.

Additionally, the analysis showed that personalized negative vocatives were very common in the data, and proved to be the type of impoliteness most easily combined with other strategies. It is typical for Greek posters to start or to finish a post with an epithet to address a certain user, and to continue their comment with other positive or negative impoliteness strategies.

On the other hand, it is essential to point out that personalized negative vocatives are often used independently (35% of the comments examined involved unspecified addressing), without referring to someone in particular, to express the posters' general disapproval of anyone opposed to their beliefs. It is indicative that, with the exception of one comment, all the comments with unspecified addresses were directed towards the "fascist" posters and were attacking their intellect, as a possible cause for their political beliefs.

Finally, regarding the types of name-calling, instances of rhetorical questions containing insults, which are a special way to impolitely address another user, should be highlighted. Coming to the internal structure of name-calling constructions, the most interesting findings are again based on the vocatives. I should underline the use of "re" and of diminutives and augmentatives attached to the epithet to intensify the insult. The nature of Greek, an inflectional language, allows speakers to use features such as suffixes to enhance the structures of impoliteness in ways not always possible in other languages.

Impoliteness in Greek online environments is a rather unexplored area. The limited scope of this paper does not allow for large-scale generalizations and further research should be undertaken to explore relevant areas. Firstly, impoliteness studies would benefit from an examination of name-calling in other videos with political content, or in other categories of Greek YouTube videos known for intense hostility, such as football-related videos. Moreover, it would be interesting to investigate how epithets as terms of address are used in other CMC platforms. Finally, one could look at other impoliteness strategies apart from name-calling in various Greek platforms.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Epithets and slot-fillers found in the dataset (according to theme and specificity of addressee)

Note: The categorization is based on the theme of the epithets with a stand-alone function. In the cases where there is also an epithet functioning as an intensifier/slot-filler, the theme of the intensifier is included in the parenthesis, and the whole construction is placed in the category where the stand-alone epithet belongs.

	Specified addressee	Unspecified addressee
<b>The mother theme</b>	bastarde Venizele- you bastard Venizelos	
	mammothrefto-mama's boy	
<b>The sexual organ theme</b>	Archida- Full of balls	mounia- cunts
	re malaka Kasidiari-you wanker/asshole Kasidiaris	
<b>The sexual activities theme</b>	eisai poustis?- are you a fag?	
	poustara- you big fag	
<b>The animal theme</b>	eisai malakas?- are you an asshole/wanker?	
	malakismeno(the sexual activities theme) katsiki pou milas ellinika(the nationality theme)- wanking greek-speaking goat	
	gida-goat	
	vodi-ox/ cow	
<b>The filth theme</b>	eisai megalo provato aderfe mou- you are a big sheep my brother	
	anthelliniko(the nationality theme) skouliki-you Greek-hating worm	oloi eseis ta neonazistika (political beliefs theme) kathizimata-all you neonazist sediments
<b>The vagrancy/barbarism theme</b>	aliti- tramp	skoupidia- scum
	trampouke- hooligan	anegkefaloi (intellect theme) troglodites-brainless troglodytes/barbarians
	vre anthrope ton spilaion-you caveman/neatherdal	
	re tsoglane- you tramp	

<b>The intellect/severity theme</b>	re anidee- you ignorant	re vlakes-you idiots
	vlima- you git	chaivania- you dumbasses
	re karagkiozako- you clown	
	re exipnokia- you smartass	
<b>The political beliefs theme</b>	komatoskilo- faithful like a dog to the political parties	fasistes-fascists
	re fanatismene- you fanatic	zoa (animal theme) fasistaria- you beastly fascists
	agapite ethnikisti- dear ethnicist	
<b>The nationality theme</b>		kammena (intellect theme) Ellinakia- destroyed Greeks
		eiste ethnoprodores- you are traitors of the nation

### **Appendix B-Comment included in section 4.3**

[koskamr](#)

Prin apo 2 mines

[se apantisi ston christi HYGROPYR](#)

Na min me axiosei o Theos oute emena na do esas sta pragmata.. Giati eida kai sto Dachau kai sto Auschwitz ti kanate. Ante autoktona gida exeis kai to thrasos na kaneis reply stin Julie P. Vodi.

#### **Translation:**

koskamr

Two months ago

in reply to user HYGROPYR

I hope God won't let me see you guys being in power. I saw what you did in Dachau and Auschwitz. Go kill yourself goat! How dare you reply to Julie P?. Cow!