

Linguistic Impoliteness And Rudeness II (LIAR II)

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PANEL: POLITENESS THEORIES AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Panel convenors: Anna Duszak (University of Warsaw), Cornelia Ilie (Univeristy of Örebro) and Margareth Sandvik (Oslo University College)

The aim of this panel is to discuss the relevance of politeness theories to political communication. The following issues will be raised:

How are conflicts, confrontations and challenges in interaction done, and what constitutes a slight in different political contexts?

How do politicians orient to politeness norms, and how do they strategically avoid them? For example, are face threatening acts straightforwardly displayed or are they avoided? What is the compensation for face threatening acts in political discourse?

The sequential organization of phenomena, such as threats, accounts, disapprovals, fallacies and in particular emotional fallacies, will be closely examined and discussed.

Part I: Interdisciplinary approaches to (im)politeness in political discourse genres

Impoliteness in Political Communication

Margareth Sandvik, Oslo University College, Norway

The starting point of this paper is the fact that modern political thinkers have drawn attention to the role of emotions in politics, opposed to consensus and rationality (Mouffe 2000, 2005, Waltzer 2004, 1999). They argue that emotions and passion is important in politics, and their claim is supported by leading political journalists, at least in Norway. This is not new: Ancient rhetoric stressed the importance of emotions in communication. Even though for Aristotle emotions (pathos) are seen as a fundamental aspect of persuasion.

Political communication can in many respects be characterized more by impoliteness than politeness. Crucial for political discourse is competition at several levels: Competition for the voters and the most voter friendly political cases, competition for the best arguments justifying the best standpoints, and in interactional argumentation, competition for the floor. Often, antagonism and aggressiveness are consequences, and impolite communicative acts are frequent (Sandvik 1997, 2004, 2009).

The aim of the present paper is twofold: firstly, it attempts to determine the concept of political face; secondly, it explores interactions between politicians and political journalists in a variety of settings. In this section examples are given that will demonstrate dimensions of political politeness across genres and interaction routines. The analytical focus will embrace both the politicians and the journalists.

The main question that will be raised in this paper is: What is the contribution of politeness theory to political communication in general, and to interactional political communication in particular? From a politeness/impoliteness perspective political discourse can be approached from a range of important issues, which will be object for discussion in the paper.

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The conception of political face presented in the paper draws upon the general concept of face (Brown and Levinson 1987), although references are made to other theories, including Goffman's theory of self-presentation (1959), the rhetorical concept of *ethos*, Grice's conversational implicatures (Grice), and emotional argumentation and fallacies.

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Carnavalesque impoliteness or opaque politeness?

Anna Duszak, University of Warsaw, Poland

The recent discursive turn in (im)politeness studies coincides with rising language awareness and "technologization" (Fairclough) of discourse styles in modern knowledge-based societies. At the same time there is a growing concern about the *conflictive, confrontational* or *adversarial* nature of text and talk in various public domains. What makes public communication impolite, aggravating, insulting, rude, aggressive or provocative?

If the general shift of research focus towards interactive, negotiable and situated meanings of (im)politeness corresponds nicely with the discursive perspective on communication, then a lot still remains to be done in the area of genre and domain specific accounts of (im)politeness. The purpose of this paper is to venture a proposal for accommodating (im)politeness theorizing within a framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA). As an approach linking linguistic and social analyses, CDA explores discourses in their capacity to *reflect* the social reality and, at the same time, to *construct* it through language. This includes contestation, subversion and rejection of an old discourse regime. Can impoliteness phenomena inform our understanding of the dynamics of *ideologies* controlling relational

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behaviour in public communication? And, in particular, what is the role of impolite language in conserving, contesting or redefining norms of social conduct?

In addressing such issues, I draw on Bakhtinian theory of *carnivalization* of language and culture. Selected aspects of his theory are overviewed and re-read for analysis of public communications in today's Poland. Can the imagery of Bakhtin's carnival assist our understanding of the current style of political talk? Is modern "carnavalesque impoliteness" an instance of opaque politeness, an anti-language in search for an alternative culture? I shall illustrate my point on a case study of a politician whose style has sparked a lively and multi-voiced discussion in the media, starting with analyses of a single act of apparent impoliteness and turning into a general debate on standards in public communication.

The interviewers' aggressive use of language in political interviews

Cornelia Ilie, Örebro University, Sweden

As has been shown in Ilie's (2001, 2004, 2005) examination of various types of parliamentary insults, institutional principles of civil/decent behaviour are often violated through deliberate acts of impoliteness intended to harm and disarm political adversaries. Unparliamentary uses of language have been found to display party-political bias and ideologically based patterns of ascribing blame and guilt. Although political interviews cannot be construed as straightforward confrontational encounters as parliamentary debates, the interviewer's hidden agenda often involves enacting an aggressive role, challenging the interviewee and uttering person-directed accusations aimed at the interviewee. These are particularly noticeable discursive practices in interviews with American presidential candidates.

The present investigation focuses on the degrees of deliberate aggressiveness in the questions asked by two interviewers – Katie Couric and Bill O'Reilly – in their interviews with Hillary Clinton during the 2008 American presidential campaign. The analytical approach is located at the interface between rhetoric, discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics. One of the major aims is to identify and examine the strategies used by interviewers to trigger particular emotional reactions from the interviewee, on the one hand, and from the audience, on the other. The fact that the emotional force of offensive rhetorical acts outweighs their rational force is used to exploit people's propensity to be more easily affected and persuaded emotionally than rationally.

Moreover, the underlying mechanisms of aggressive discursive behaviour in political interviews can provide important clues about moral and social standards, prejudices, taboos, as well as value judgements, of individuals in a community. How do accusations or criticisms get perceived as aggressive? When do ironical or sarcastic utterances become less than polite? To what extent are aggressive uses of language more person-related than institutional discourse genre-related?

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The impoliteness of academic Northern Ireland unionism

Jyrki Ruohomäki, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

My paper will discuss the politeness and impoliteness of scientific discussion and scholarly activity. I will approach this question by asking what is meant by scientific politeness and how can one be scientifically impolite? As a partial answer to this, I will offer an interpretation of Max Weber's notion of objectivity, of which I will put forward a reading interpreting scientific "objectivity" as a call for "fair play". In my paper Weber's fair play is then understood as a norm for scientific politeness and a violation of this fair play as an act of impoliteness. I will then use my Weber reading to approach science that is politically committed.

In essence, I will ask is politically committed study a violation of scientific fair play, and therefore impolite, or can it be seen merely as one example of the strand of normatively committed study, and therefore not as a violation of scientific politeness? I will approach this question through a case study of politically committed scholars attached to Northern Ireland unionism. I will show how the study of Northern Ireland unionism is in some cases normatively committed in such a way that it originates from a politically committed standpoint of a given scholar. Then I will ask, whether these studies and other scholarly activities of these scholars could be taken as violations of scientific politeness, understood as fair play? In other words, is politically committed research a violation of objectivity and politeness, breaking the norms in scientific discussion? I will also offer examples that could be taken as rude violations of scientific politeness, or interpreted contrary as radical breaks from previously held conventions.

Emotion and (im)politeness in political discourse

Ariadna Ștefănescu, University of Bucharest, Romania

Emotion stirred by a certain state of facts is neutral with respect of politeness and impoliteness. It is a given fact. The positive or the negative evaluation of the emotion reshapes the state of affairs; it forms a new mental construct which can be expressed using the rhetoric of linguistic politeness or impoliteness.

The expression of the emotion in the political discourse is: (i) part of the communicative intentions of the speaker; (ii) a way by which one can make more flexible and more intricate the concepts which underline the debate; (iii) a way of understanding the real facts; (iv) an indirect procedure to construct one's face; (v) a possibility of modifying the concepts, of enlarging or narrowing their scope, and of establishing new relations with other concepts.

We use *emotion* not only with its standard meaning, but also from a cognitive point of view. Certain concepts that are frequent in the political discourse (*country, liberty, territory, language, history, etc.*) are cultural constructs, which one cannot fully understand if emotion is neglected.

The emotion is an intrinsic part of those notions. It represents the force that contributed at the constituency of these constructs. Its subtle feedback (either direct or indirect) in certain social

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or political contexts improves the understanding of the scope of the concept, the evolution of its meaning and its influence in a given society and culture.

Each political concept contains certain potential emotions. The attack directed against the emotion triggered by a political concept in a certain social context might be a way to attack a mentality.

Such (repeated) attacks might amount to impoliteness, to political incorrect language, to adverse theses and ideologies. Moreover, the adherence to the constitutive emotion of a concept, the increase of the emotional potential of a political concept are aspects of an empathic behavior which has its own rhetoric, and which is capable of modifying a mentality.

In this paper we intend to analyze the relation between the constitutive emotion of a political construct and (im)politeness.

We want to identify whether slogans, taboo-words, catch-phrases or fashionable words, frequent (and stable) implicatures with (im)polite significance in the present political discourse represent a linguistic reflex of a polite (or impolite) evaluation of the constitutive emotion. In other words, the underlying theses are: (i) a political theme is made up of, besides its footprint in reality, an appreciative or depreciative evaluation of its constituent emotion; (ii) politeness can structure some political constructs.

Part II: Parliamentary impoliteness

Punch and Judy politics: Face aggravation in Prime Minister's Question Time

Peter Bull and Hannah Law, University of York, U.K.

In the United Kingdom, Prime Minister's Question Time (PMQT) is a weekly 30-minute parliamentary session, in which the Prime Minister responds to questions from both government and opposition Members of Parliament (MPs). PMQT is notorious for its adversarial discourse, characterized by British Conservative Party leader David Cameron as "Punch and Judy politics". To examine PMQT discourse is the purpose of this paper.

From an analysis of 12 sessions of PMQT, Harris (2001) argued that its discourse is characterized by intentional face-threatening acts (FTAs). The study to be reported here was based on a further 20 PMQTs. Ten were with Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair, 10 with his successor Gordon Brown; in all 20 sessions, their opponent was David Cameron. The aim of the study was to devise a new typology of FTAs in PMQT.

This typology is organized in terms of four superordinate categories:

1 & 2. Questions and Responses. In PMQT, MPs are expected to converse through questions and replies, while refraining from "unparliamentary language" (e.g., direct insults). However, an insult or other FTA couched in the form of a question or included within a reply may be deemed acceptable.

3. Speaking Turns. FTAs (e.g., asides and prefaces) may be performed as part of the wider speaking turn, without constituting either questions or replies.

4. Other techniques. FTAs may be performed through techniques not dependent on the turn-taking structure of PMQT (e.g., humour, third person references and quotations).

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Arguably, face aggravation in PMQT is not just an acceptable form of parliamentary discourse, it is both sanctioned and rewarded (Harris, 2001). How well this adversarial discourse serves the democratic process will be considered in the Discussion.

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French and Irish Parliamentary Insults

Paule Salerno-O'Shea, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

In linguistics, Ilie's analysis of British and Swedish parliamentary insults has provided a framework built along three dimensions: "polarisation", "mitigation" and "interplay between in-group identity and inter-group dissent" (Ilie: 2004).

This paper will:

- draw on Ilie's framework to present a contrastive analysis of (un)parliamentary language in France and Ireland;
- provide a better knowledge of insults in both contexts;
- draw political consequences of such a situation.

Discourse produced in second deliberative chambers is more respectful than that of first deliberative chambers (Steiner et al.: 2004)). Therefore, lack of respect in senates constitutes a deviation from the norm and is more meaningful than in national assemblies.

This is why debates in the French *Sénat* and in the Irish *Seanad* will constitute the corpus for this study. Insults will proceed from the controversial topics being discussed (French housing bill and Irish budget, both autumn 2008).

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Mockery in political rhetoric: the case of the House of Commons

Taru Haapala, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

In my doctoral dissertation I explore the subject of mockery in political rhetoric. My main analysis material involves debates in the House of Commons in England in the late 20th century. The study involves questions such as how different audiences are addressed in the Commons' debates analysed, what are the desired effects, and what is the political gain acquired by making fun of an opponent. As a tool for my rhetorical analysis I aim at using historical approach, by which I intend to distance myself from some of the contemporary

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prejudices regarding my subject matter. But I also think that it is important to contextualise the debates in contemporary political culture. That brings to the fore themes such as legitimacy of political representation and electoral competition outside Parliament. For example, Members of the House of Commons must keep favourable image in the eyes of the wider public, even though they are not answerable of their actions as parliamentarians during debates. As mockery is concerned, occasions in practising it must be carefully reflected by the Members because they have to obey the rules of the House of not publicly offending any particular Member. Thus, in regards of executing this kind of research, there is the difficulty of identifying the ideal uses of the tool while it may be so well practised that it might get unnoticed. It is, then, also problematic to point out the exact political effect. However, mockery as a political phenomenon, as approached in this study, may give us new ways of understanding these problematics in contemporary politics.

Verbal Aggressiveness in the Romanian Parliamentary Debate. Past and Present

Melania Roibu and Mihaela-Viorica Constantinescu, University of Bucharest, Romania

Our aim is to present in a pragma-rhetorical theoretical framework the way the verbal aggressiveness is manifested in the parliamentary debate, with reference to certain lexical and argumentative choices. In the parliamentary interaction the indirectness (Ilie 2001, 2003) softens the verbal attacks of the MPs, but the degree of indirectness is highly variable.

Our approach questions the difference in the verbal aggressiveness manifested in the discourses (difference in the realization of the verbal attack, difference in scale, etc.) between the early Romanian parliamentary debate and the present day one. The old times are sometimes idealized, whereas the present day aggressiveness of the discourses is considered a “legacy” of the communist regime that destroyed the idea of a free debate and whose totalitarian language was, for a time, the only public discourse allowed (Adamson 2008).

The data of this paper are collected from the Romanian parliamentary debates from 1866 up to the present.

The main focus will be on the role of the metacommunicative and metadiscursive comments (cf. Ilie 2003), which, along with the metaphors used to frame the situation and the “staged intertextuality” (as in Kotthoff 2002), contribute to the de-construction and external evaluation of the adversary’s discourse (using the observations of Harris 2001, Llewellyn 2006). These comments point out some cases of frequent fallacies in the discourses (cf. Kienpointner 2008).

We believe that impoliteness (in the paradigm described by Culpeper 1996, Culpeper et al. 2003, Bousfiled 2008), sometimes rudeness, of the MPs could be revealed by studying the fallacies used, and the way other discourses are evaluated and staged.

Straightforward vs. disguised impoliteness in the Romanian parliamentary discourse

Liliana Ruxandoiu, University of Bucharest, Romania

The paper analyses some excerpts from the debates in the Romanian parliament. Its aim is to prove that directness and indirectness in communication are not unambiguously correlated with impoliteness or politeness. The same type of strategy, either on record or off record, can express politeness as well as impoliteness. Irony, whose position within the politeness strategic system will be thoroughly examined, is a good example. We intend to determine the

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parameters of the communicative context that affect both speaker's strategic choices and their evaluation by the audience in the particular case of the parliamentary discourse. The fact that this is an institutional public discourse, where monologues are dialogically structured will be taken into account. A distinction will be made between the *in praesentia* and *in absentia* impoliteness.

Part III: Cross-cultural political (im)politeness

I knew you'd say that: face attack as mutual face enhancement in the public arena

Jim O'Driscoll, University of Huddersfield, U.K.

It is a recurrent complaint of British political life that politicians spend too much time slagging each other off and scoring points off each other instead of getting together to solve society's problems. Likewise, Tracy (2008) cites a discourse which emphasises the need for, and sometimes decries the lack of, civility in American public life. However, she goes on to argue (through the examination of a local governance forum) that personal criticism of other actors is not merely inevitable but actually necessary for the proper functioning of democratic processes.

Tracy construes such personal criticism as face-attack. In contrast, Hernandez-Flores (2008), in her analysis of a Spanish TV political talk-show, refuses to analyse personalised contradictions of other's views as face-attack (in her scheme, 'impolite'). In her view, such acts are no more than politic behaviour on this kind of occasion. She categorises them instead as examples of 'self-facework'.

Two questions arise from the above. First, there is an analytical question: What *is* the essence of face-attack? Second, what is the function of such behaviour *for participants* on this kind of occasion? To help answer them, this paper analyses the face effects of interpersonally antagonistic exchanges in a number of snippets from the BBC's Question Time programme (another podium-panel event). Analysis reveals a number of cases in which such utterances appear to have the effect of enhancing not only self-face but also other-face. The paper also makes reference to the concept of cross-culturally divergent interactional styles.

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Impoliteness in the communist regime in Poland and Hungary

Małgorzata Suszczyńska, Institute of English and American Studies, Hungary

It is well known that the introduction of communism in Central European countries such as Poland and Hungary lead to the increase in impoliteness in many public or semi-public settings, in particular in services and in state institutions.

In my paper I want to present some findings of semi-structured interviews with native Polish and Hungarian participants on their experiences of the old regime, and I want to argue that

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impoliteness in communist Poland and Hungary was much more than a side effect of permanent shortages on the market. The new communist system, in the name of the communist ideology, wanted to change not only economy and social structure but also the way people interacted with each other by (1) systematic non-adherence to certain norms of politic behavior, which resulted in the visible absence of expected behaviors, particularly in public and institutional settings, and by (2) direct or indirect imposition of new verbal behaviors that for many citizens were experienced and assessed as rude and face-threatening, inducing discomfort in daily interactions and leading to a division into ‘us’ (mainly family and friends, where face was protected) and ‘them’ (representatives of all kinds of state-own services and institutions, where face was threatened), which antagonized and disintegrated society. Although the presence and function of impoliteness in institutional settings has already been recognized, I want to argue that in the case of the countries under communist regime the scope of the phenomenon was broader and impoliteness was perceived not as a matter of this or that institution (like the military or the police) but as symptomatic of the political system and its ideology. In other words, people interpreted impolite behaviors on the micro-level of everyday interaction as induced not merely by other individuals (in their private selves or in their institutional roles) but as transcending various domains of social life from the macro-level of ‘impolite’, hostile ideology and political system.

Part IV: (Im)politeness patterns in the American presidential election

Non-verbal Impoliteness in the 2008 Presidential Debates

Bruce Fraser, Boston University, U.S.A.

Shortly after the first 2008 presidential debate there was a uproar over the way in which Senator McCain interacted with Senator Obama. MSNBC’s Chris Matthews summed it up as follows:

What do you make of what I take is contempt?...To treat your opponent with such contempt that not once throughout the evening do you give him the courtesy of looking at him...He [McCain] never looked at his opponent. What is that about? Is that an inferiority complex, embarrassment, guilt, or is that contempt?

www.metacafe.com/watch/1806289/mccains_lack_of_eye_contact_a_sign_of_contempt/

In this paper, I examine a relatively unexplored area of impoliteness: the ways in which the non-verbal behavior of candidates in a debate convey messages to the viewing audience and, crucially, whether the messages were deemed appropriate, given the debate context. That is, were these messages judged polite or impolite – a non-verbal perlocutionary effect.

To do this, I obtained judgments on non-verbal candidate behavior from residents from the Boston area. These included individuals who were black, Hispanic, and white, men and women, and ranging in age from teenagers to 60s. At the end of the interview, each was asked who they had voted for.

The subjects were shown selected video clips from the 90 minute “debate” and then asked to characterize (label) the non-verbal message(s) conveyed by each man, if any. Some of the clips were unexceptional, while some show lack of eye contact, aggressive posture, eye-

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rolling, gesticulating, shrugging, and the like. The subjects were then asked if, in their view, this behavior was acceptable in the debate context and on what basis they made their decision.

The preliminary results indicate that for the first debate, Obama sent few impolite messages about McCain to the audience, although his facial set suggested skepticism at McCain's statements. In contrast, McCain sent a definite message of disrespect for Obama by failing to give eye contact (not contempt, as suggested above), signaling for some, that Obama was a man who wasn't even there.

I presume that the results of this type of non-verbal research, when combined with research on verbal (im)politeness, will show that there is an interaction between the two types in a given context.

'Hey, can I call you Joe?': (Im)Politeness in the 2008 U.S. Vice-Presidential Debate

Sarah Simeziane, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.

The October 2, 2008 front page of the *New York Times* read 'Cordial but Pointed, Palin and Biden Face Off'. Within the context of political discourse, what exactly constitutes *cordial* behavior? This paper seeks to identify (im)politeness norms in campaign debates and asks: is impoliteness in this genre of political discourse really *impolite*? According to the literature, political discourse is inherently combative; nevertheless it requires a delicate balancing act between politeness and impoliteness strategies that involves attacking the opponent's positive face but maintaining his/her negative face. I examine to what degree impoliteness is tolerated and even expected in US (vice-)presidential debates and how Haugh's (2007) distinction between moral and empirical norms and theoretical frameworks of politeness, impoliteness and rudeness, such as Terkourafi (2008), can help identify (im)politeness norms as well as marked departures from them in this setting. What kind of (im)politeness norms are constructed and maintained in political discourse and how do they relate to "everyday" conversational norms?

Assuming intentionality to be necessary for attributions of (im)politeness (following Locher and Watts 2008), or *marked* politeness/rudeness (following Terkourafi 2008), I present an analysis of the 2008 Vice-Presidential debate between Joe Biden and Sarah Palin. The data includes pre-debate articles outlining the expectations for the candidates, the transcript of the debate, and post-debate commentary by the media and general public in the form of blogs, online discussions, and letters to the editor. Using linguistic evidence from interruptions, forms of address, and evasiveness I look at which types of Garcia-Pastor's (2008) "face aggravating strategies" are employed by both candidates and how these strategies are taken up by the candidates, the moderator, and the wider audience. Finally, I suggest an elaboration of the notion of positive face and show how it can contribute to a more precise definition of (im)politeness in political discourse.

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