

PhD Proposal

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'Impoliteness and Identity in Conflict Interactions and Hate Speech'

Literature Review: Theoretical Framework & Terminology

The growing interest in the phenomenon of *linguistic politeness* has given rise to a wide range of studies which focus on new issues beyond the traditional concept of *politeness* proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987). Thus, the so-called postmodern approaches to politeness began to illuminate other aspects of the issue such as *impoliteness* and the discursive nature of both linguistic phenomena (Haugh et al. 2013; Mills, 2011; Locher & Watts, 2005; 2008; Watts, 2005). At the same time, the research focused on the conceptualization and the evaluation of *politeness* highlighting the interlocutor's aspect. However, based on Eelen's critique (2001: 119), interest turned to the phenomenon of *linguistic impoliteness*, which was introduced by Culpeper's theoretical framework (Culpeper, 1996; 2016). Consequently, in recent years studies have emerged focusing on what is called *politeness1*, that is, the speakers' judgments about what constitutes politeness, in contrast with *politeness2* which refers to researchers' perceptions of the concepts of *politeness* and *impoliteness* (Eelen, 2001; Mills, 2011; Fukushima & Haugh, 2014). Nevertheless, the adoption of the discursive approach is not limited to *politeness* and *impoliteness*, but also applies to *identity* (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Two of the most important theoretical approaches to the linguistic study of *identity* are Locher & Watts' *Relational Work* (2005; 2008), as well as Spencer-Oatey's *Rapport Management* (2002; 2005; 2005; 2007; 2008). In both frameworks, *identity* is perceived as a dynamic product constructed and evolving during each interaction, while emphasis is placed on the interpersonal aspect of communication and, therefore, on politeness and impoliteness. On the other hand, contexts characterized by the term *hate speech*, as Culpeper, Iganski & Sweiry (2017) mention, are based on the use of expressions of abusive content, insults, threats, taboo words, but also attacks on someone's identity and values. All these elements can, therefore, be perceived as strategies of linguistic impoliteness (Culpeper et al., 2017; Culpeper, 2011; 2016). The difference, however, between impoliteness and hate speech is that the former includes linguistic expressions that cause less damage to the interlocutor's face, compared to the latter in which face damage is far more intense (Culpeper et al., 2017: 25). Finally, regarding the contexts

of conflict interactions, it is emphasized that they start from different perceptions of the interlocutors on the respective issue, but it seems that even in this case the view of the co-construction process is adopted (Bou-Franch & Blitvich, 2014). Although the conflict is perceived as aggressive behaviour, Bou-Franch & Blitvich (2014) propose that this is a phenomenon that arises during the interaction as a result of the interlocutors' participation in the conversation.

Research Proposal: Objectives, Data & Methodology

Based on the above, the aim of the proposed dissertation is to study the phenomenon of linguistic impoliteness in contexts of hate speech and conflict and to analyse how interlocutors construct and negotiate their identities during the respective conversations. In the next phase, the aim will be to ask native speakers to evaluate these interactions in terms of the phenomena already mentioned. Our focus will be on both the impoliteness strategies and the speakers' perceptions of them. The linguistic impoliteness and, therefore, its evaluation will be used as indicators for the construction and evaluation of identity in contexts of conflict and hate speech, so as to draw the meta-pragmatic notion of impoliteness (Fukushima & Haugh, 2014). Through questionnaires that will include specific interactions drawn from YouTube and Twitter, a random sample of Greek speakers will be asked to evaluate both the phenomenon of impoliteness and the process of (co)constructing identities for the participants in the respective contexts. The data included in the questionnaire will come from public discussions on the aforementioned social media and will refer to modern social issues. The use of impoliteness strategies frequently occurs in these interactions leading to conflict and hate speech. The results of the questionnaire will be analysed quantitatively while at the same time a qualitative analysis of the data will be carried out in order to highlight the *politeness*². The selection of the interactions that will be evaluated through the questionnaire will be based on popular videos and publications that have been posted on the Internet after the year 2018. A specific number of comments will be selected along with the threads created under the original comments. Therefore, the objectives of the proposed dissertation are summarized in the evaluation of impoliteness by the speakers, in identifying the linguistic strategies that lead to conflict and hate speech, in highlighting the meta-pragmatic judgments of the speakers about these processes and, finally, in identity construction and negotiation.

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