

INTRODUCTION.

HONEY AND PEPPER: INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES TO (IM)POLITENESS ACROSS DOMAINS

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This volume is the outcome of a selection of papers on interdisciplinary approaches to (im)politeness across domains mostly presented at the 14th Symposium on Politeness (Sympol 2023 – University of Madeira, Portugal, <https://editord22.wixsite.com/sympol2023>), in the panel titled Honey and Pepper: an exploratory dialogue across and beyond disciplinary boundaries (Topic 3: Practical applications of (im)politeness studies across domains). In the light of the subheading of the Symposium - new frontiers, synergies and perspectives - this volume is meant to offer a fruitful dialogue among academics' ongoing research drawing on data collected in various discourse communities and practices: politics, parliamentary discourse, war, social control and female identity expression in the political Japanese arena, academic discourse, urban policies – housing, daily interactions and underlying inter- and intracultural differences, public service, and fake news. It aims to highlight and debate research findings on politeness studies seeking to enhance a much-desired cooperative glocal research community. The contributors' research in this issue covers a selection of linguistic evidence in several languages, namely, Portuguese, Italian, English and Japanese, analysed from a practical and/or theoretical stance to shed light on ways forward to envisage the impact of (im)politeness beyond the sheer academic context upon society at large. This is coupled by two book reviews on interdisciplinary approaches, notably the edited volume by Maria-Ionela Neagu and Diana Costea, titled *Multimodal Communication and Soft Skills Development* (2022) by Crina Herteg (*1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba Iulia, Romania), along with Schauer's insights on *Intercultural Competence and Pragmatics* (2024), by João Bernardo Silva (*Universidade Aberta*, Lisbon, Portugal).

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The critical appraisal of diverse theories on politeness by Giacomo Ferrari broadens the scope of the study into an interdisciplinary and intralingual stance (particularly in Livornese and Piedmontese varieties) perceived as complementary in as much as “conflict avoidance and face work form the ‘semantics’ of the ‘acts of politeness’, as all of them are based on the intention of making the interaction as smooth as possible” (p. 15). Furthermore, the author claims that “social rules mostly deal with the choice of the surface forms, such as discourse structure and lexicon” (p. 15). A final element underpins this review while stressing diversity across cultures.

The overwhelming turn to the digital space by contemporary (pro)/(con)sumers of information in several discursive written practices, regarding health, science and well-being, underpins Alexandra Nunes’ research with a special focus on face and (im)politeness in terms of address in European Portuguese used in online news and fake news. The study draws on an extensive selection and comparison of corpora of online news websites and websites labelled as fake news producers unveiling the theoretical boundaries indebted to a deeper understanding of interactive mediated experiences particularly with reference to the proximization theory (Cap, 2013, Kopytowska, 2022) and (im)politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987; cf. Wiczorek 2008, Korostenskienė, 2020). Research findings point to distinct uses of personal pronoun reference, *tu / você*, notably: i. to avoid being impolite or threatening the hearer’s face, ii. to be perceived as potential face-threatening acts, even though being mainly used as (inter)personal and/or emotional proximation strategies rather frequent in fake news outlets. Finally, the researcher claims that “proximising through (im)politeness, first-person plural pronouns are used in all corpora as a strategy to include the hearer(s)” (p. 29).

Borrowing from a pragmalinguistic stance, the study by Rita Faria curiously titled “Hi Carlinhos, how are the unicorns?” examines the role of forms of address (FA) in European Portuguese conveyed in citizens’ online prompts via Twitter/X to the mayor’s policies at times of housing crisis in Lisbon (2023). These are “deployed as stance-taking devices to signal opposition or (less often) alignment” (p. 56). “The corpus thus becomes a showcase of the multiple, complex lexical and syntactic options afforded by the address system in EP. However, it is important not to lose track of the significance of conventionalised forms in the corpus, namely the 3P *pro-drop* which, albeit less recurrent than the 2P, was prominent”. Hence the review of literature on the complexity of forms of address in European Portuguese considering their perlocutionary impact is reported in the scope of a multilayered framework: grammar, lexis, discourse and pragmatics. In her own words, these “suggest an all-encompassing system where a dynamic use of forms runs parallel to normative conventional restraints demanding a fairly rigid match between form and context/interlocutor” (p. 58), as well as an act of identity. Thus, and reporting: i. Vásquez (2021, p. 41) “new pragmatic norms may be evolving on different social media platforms”, meaning that “attention to the digital context where potentially (im)polite utterances are produced is crucial”; ii. McVittie et al. (2021), and in the case of Twitter, its informality and accessibility, allowing for quick, brief messages and equally brief, spontaneous replies, has become “a double-edged sword” (p. 61)

due to how easily users can become “a target for insults” (p. 61). The analysis of the data shows that the linguistic complexity of EP forms of address point to sociocultural factors at play, namely a leaning towards linguistic indirectness that might be culturally motivated. “A final point worthy of mention pertains to the anti-immigration discourses marking an anti-measure stance that this study has uncovered by focusing on a corpus where the current Lisbon housing crisis was debated.” (p. 77).

Monica Mosca’s study of exploratory reflexive and ethnographic kind broadens the scope of FTAs analysis in interdiscursive domains of service encounters in institutional / administrative discursive practices indebted to citizens’ interaction in urban contexts, notably in an Italian context. As the researcher puts it, it is worth reflecting on impoliteness and “stereotypes and communication strategies adopted by citizens, alongside ““disengagement” strategies to exit conflict” (p. 86) from a pragmatic approach. The analysis of a couple of authentic interactions point to further insights “into potential strategies for mitigating conflict and improving citizen-employee interactions in public administrations” (p. 86).

Drawing on extensive, systematic research on parliamentary discourse, Maria Aldina Marques advocates a *discursive (im)politeness* stance within the broader multimodal discursive context illustrated in her analysis of pragmalinguistic evidence from “the official records of the Portuguese Parliament (*Diário da Assembleia da República*), covering the country’s current democratic period” (p. 103). (i.e., 1974–present). Her genre-specific investigation comes to the fore in a theoretical and methodological overview of a comprehensive selection of parliamentary interactions following items such as the context of Portuguese parliamentary debates with special reference to verbal and non-verbal (im)politeness; ratified and unratified impoliteness; as well as discursive bounds of non-verbal impoliteness.

Yoko Yanazawa’s paper, of an exploratory kind, extends the analysis in intercultural pragmatics, by drawing on parliamentary debate transcripts of two “female politicians’ distinct political orientations, family backgrounds, and public reception as observed on social media” (p. 122). The focus on language coupled by its impact in the Japanese political arena sheds some light on the linguistic strategies conveying their own style and “thereby construct their political personae within the context of the Japanese parliament”. The findings point to pragmalinguistic strategies entailing polite and honorific language (e.g., predicate honorifics entailing verbal suppletion and the productive use of prefixes and suffixes) along with the grammatical expression of social relations, i.e., sentence length, borrowing from Jarkey (2021).

The case study by Sousa¹ & Gonçalves² on Zelensky's communicative strategies against "terror", focuses on the analysis of President Zelensky's initial direct addresses (Feb. 2022–March 2023) to a wide variety of interlocutors, seeking support against the Russian invader, mostly encoded in his mother tongue and mediated by the English language, thereby challenging deep-seated attitudes and avoiding generalisations and universals in human interaction. Following a lexicometric approach to the corpus collected this study intertwines a pragmalinguistic and discursive framework aiming to uncover the locutor's communicative strategies against the invader. These end up being understood as a rhetorical endeavour to save Ukraine's face. Despite the wide literature on communicative strategies at times of crisis, Zelensky's initial addresses on behalf of his fellow citizens make scarce use of offensive words against the enemy, which may translate his effort to create ingroup relations to disempower the perpetrator.

Teodora Popescu investigates gendered proverbs as culturally stabilised evaluative patterns that encode unequal expectations for women and men. By means of a qualitative contrastive analysis of Romanian and English proverb collections, her paper - "A good woman is...": *gendered evaluation and discursive fossilisation in Romanian and English proverbs* – is centred on how figurative language conveys norms related to domestic roles, marriage, moral conduct, authority, and social value. The analysis carried out pinpoints recurrent asymmetries: women are more often targeted by moral judgement and behavioural prescriptions, whilst men are more frequently associated with agency and authority. Such patterns are interpreted as features of proverbial meaning and cultural availability rather than as evidence of direct behavioural influence. Teodora Popescu also considers Romanian media examples where such formulations are quoted, adapted, or rejected, showing that gendered proverbs remain relevant as recognisable evaluative templates that can still be mobilised or contested in contemporary communication.

Cristina Kallai's paper entitled *A comparative discourse-pragmatic and rhetorical analysis of American presidential festive speeches* focuses on festive speeches by Barack Obama and Donald Trump as instances of epideictic presidential discourse shaped by celebration, unity, and shared values. Making use of Critical Discourse Analysis and of insights from conceptual metaphor theory, the author examines figurative language, evaluation, forms of address, and symbolic references in a corpus of speeches delivered on such occasions as Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Her research findings show that despite following the conventions of the genre, both presidents deploy its rhetorical resources differently. Obama tends to frame national identity in civic and inclusion-oriented terms, relying on metaphors of journey, hope, and collective responsibility; Trump emphasizes

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strength, protection, and military commemoration, drawing on martial imagery and defence-oriented narratives. Cristina Kallai argues that these contrasts reflect different configurations of shared genre conventions rather than departures from epideictic norms.

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