

Verbal Impoliteness, Strategies and Typology

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Abstract

This article has as a starting point the linguistic theories of politeness and the opposed phenomenon, verbal impoliteness. The theories of impoliteness and conflict are parallel, but opposed to those of politeness. However, new research does not admit the description of impoliteness as a mere deviation from the politeness theories or as a phenomenon that breaks rules and maxims of cooperative and polite communication. Verbal impoliteness, a constitutive aspect of conflictive communication, is a prototypical non-cooperative type of behaviour, but this behaviour is not always necessarily and completely irrational or competitive.

Keyword: Phenomenon, Verbal Impoliteness, Politeness Theories, Theories of Politeness, Reverse Phenomenon, Linguistic communication

1.Introduction

This presentation has as a starting point the linguistic theories of politeness and the reverse phenomenon, verbal impoliteness. The impoliteness theories and the theories of conflict

are parallel, but opposed to those of politeness. Despite this, the newest research in the domain do not admit the description of the impoliteness phenomenon as a mere deviation from the theories of politeness or as a phenomenon that breaks rules and maxims of cooperative and polite communication. Politeness or impoliteness of a speech act represents an aspect related to degree or level; the impoliteness phenomenon cannot be simply regarded as a secondary phenomenon, derived from that of politeness. Verbal impoliteness, a constitutive aspect of conflictive communication, is a type of non-cooperative prototypical behaviour, but it is not necessary that this behaviour should be entirely and permanently irrational or competitive. All these aspects are going to be highlighted by means of conversational analysis done on the basis of some minutes that reproduce working sessions of the Romanian Senate and on the basis of a transcription of a television programme, namely a talk show.

2. Strategies of politeness and their opposite

Starting from the politeness theories, Jonathan Culpeper (1996) tries to describe the strategies of impoliteness and of aggression, strategies that represent the negative counterpart of the strategies described by Brown and Levinson. The latter ones suggested five politeness “super-strategies”. By means of these strategies “face”¹-threatening acts are performed, acts that are systematically related to the threatening degree; thus the first is associated to a minimum degree and the last one to the highest: **bald on record** (the face-threatening act is minimum and it is performed in the most direct, unambiguous and concise way possible), **positive politeness** (the use of strategies meant to satisfy the addressee’s positive face wants), **negative politeness** (the use of strategies meant to satisfy the addressee’s negative face wants), **off-record** (the face threatening act is performed in such a way that there is more than one unambiguously

attributable intention; in Gricean terms, this is the performance of a face-threatening act by means of an implicature) and **withhold the face-threatening act**.

Each of these politeness "super-strategies" corresponds to an opposed impoliteness "super-strategy". They can be considered as opposed from the point of view of the face orientation. Instead of enhancing or supporting face, the impoliteness strategies are a means of attacking face.

In the case of **bald on record** the face-threatening act is produced in a direct unambiguous and concise way, in such circumstances so that the "face" is not irrelevant or minimised; for Brown and Levinson this strategy "bald on record" is a politeness strategy that can be applied in specific circumstances; the corresponding impoliteness strategy can be applied when the face concern is not suspended in an emergency situation, when the threat to the addressee's face is present; in all these cases there exists a minimum threat to the addressee's face. In the next fragment, a fragment from a minute that reproduces a working session of the Romanian Senate, B's threatening at the addressee's face is minimum, because the positions are already taken, the roles are assumed since Teodor Viorel Meleşcanu is the president of the working session (the chairman), the moderator of the whole discussion while senator Ungheanu is a simple participant to this debate. Despite this, the face of the interlocutor is not minimised and we can notice a clear intention in the face-threatening act that produces in a direct way:

(1) A: Domnul Teodor Viorel Meleşcanu: / Mr. Teodor Viorel Meleşcanu:

Vă supărați dacă vă rog să adresați întrebările? / **Do you mind if I asked you to address the questions?**

B: Domnul Mihai Ungheanu: / Mr. Mihai Ungheanu:

Nu, eu nu am de spus întrebări. / **No, I don't have questions to ask.**

Doamna a adresat două întrebări, eu am o dezbatere. *Dacă doriți să nu vorbesc, eu fiind și specialist, înseamnă că.../ The lady asked two questions, I have a debate. If you want me not to speak, considering my position of a specialist, this means...*

Domnul Teodor Viorel Meleşcanu: / **Mr. Teodor Viorel Meleşcanu :**

Cu mare plăcere, însă există un mod de a proceda care prevede că fiecare grup vorbește printr-un reprezentat în debaterile generale și vă rog... (*Discuții în sală*)
/ **I would kindly allow you that, but there is a procedure that states that every group is represented by a person in the general debates and I would like to ask you... (Discussions in the room)**

Domnul Mihai Ungheanu: / **Mr. Mihai Ungheanu:**

Domnule președinte, / Mister president,

Nu o să doriți să creăm discuții inutile acum, aici... / You won't be willing to create useless discussions now, here...

Domnul Teodor Viorel Meleşcanu: / **Mr. Teodor Viorel Meleşcanu:**

O să vă rog respectuos să vă continuați intervenția și să încercați să fiți cât mai sintetic. / **I would kindly ask you to continue your intervention and to try to be as synthetic as possible.**

Positive impoliteness is characterised by the use of strategies applied with the intention of not satisfying the demands of the addressee's positive face namely the necessity of obtaining approval. In the case of positive impoliteness the main strategy that is used is argumentation. Positive impoliteness is represented in the majority of cases by situations of verbal disagreement;

the “search” for disagreement is one of the strategies used under this type of “super-strategy”. In example (2), B contradicts A, using argumentation in order to produce a threatening act to his positive face. In the end of the debate, A is not going to obtain approval.

(2) **A: Domnul Gheorghe Funar: / Mr. Gheorghe Funar:**

Așa cum am arătat și în expunerea de motive, din păcate, statul român și cel dinaintea de 1990, cel de după 1990, nu a sprijinit financiar aceste chilii și schituri românești de pe Sfântul Munte Athos și așa cum s-a remarcat și în mass-media și s-a solicitat din partea călugărilor este nevoie de un sprijin. / **As we demonstrated in our presentation of the reasons, unfortunately, the Romanian State, both the one before 1990 and the one after, didn't support financially those Romanian cells and hermitages from the Sacred Mountain Athos, as it was noticed in the mass-media and as it was requested by the monks, they need a support.**

Noi venim în fața dumneavoastră și sperăm să îmbrățișați această propunere legislativă. [...] / **We come here in front of you and we hope you can embrace this legislative proposal.**

B: Domnul Ioan Onisei: / Mr. Ioan Onisei:

*Guvernul nu este de acord cu această propunere legislativă pentru următoarele rațiuni pe care le trec în revistă foarte pe scurt. / **The Government does not agree to this legislative proposal for the following reasons that I am going to mention briefly.***

*Întâi de toate, există un cadru legal pentru sprijinirea construcției de biserici, repararea acestora și sprijin acordat clerului. / **First of all, there is a legal frame***

for supporting the building of churches, their mending and for supporting the clergy.

*Un al doilea argument important este că propunerea legislativă nu precizează operațiunile ce ar urma să fie finanțate de la bugetul de stat. [...] / A **second important argument would be that the legislative proposal does not state the operations that would be going to be financed from the State budget.***

*În fine, cel mai important lucru este că schiturile românești de pe Sfântul Munte Athos nu au personalitate juridică, prin urmare, o alocație bugetară de acest gen s-ar duce de fapt la Biserica greacă. / **Finally, the most important thing is that the Romanian hermitages from The Sacred Mountain Athos do not have a juridical personality, therefore a budgetary allocation of this type would actually go to the Greek Church.***

In its turn, **negative impoliteness** is characterised by the use of strategies applied with the intention of not satisfying the demands of the addressee's negative face namely the necessity of not being forced or obliged to act in a certain manner. The negative impoliteness has thus as a goal the opponent's forcing to react in a certain manner. In example (3) this reply is a continuation at a distance of a previous intervention. By means of this intervention A limits the discussion, advancing an accusation and in this way forcing his interlocutor, in this case:

(3) A: Domnul Octavian-Mircea Purceld: / Mr. Octavian-Mircea Purceld:

O să profit și eu de faptul că domnul Vosgianian vorbește după mine. De fapt nu am preferințe cine să răspundă, dar aș dori un răspuns, totuși, clar. Ori domnul ministru al finanțelor, ori domnul președinte al comisiei din Senat să ne spună și

nouă de ce nu respectați Programul de guvernare. / **I shall take advantage of the fact that Mr. Vosgianian will follow me. Actually I don't have any preferences regarding who is going to answer, but I would still like to have a clear answer. Either The Minister of Finance or The President of The Senate Commission should tell us why you don't obey the government Programme.**

La pagina 19, în Capitolul VI, de exemplu la cercetare spune 1%, dar eu întreb altceva, în temeiul cărui document nu respectați Programul de guvernare. V-ați asumat răspunderea. *Haideți să stabilim clar care este actul dumneavoastră prin care ați anulat, ați abrogat de fapt, această hotărâre, acest program de guvernare. Renunțați la el? Spuneți-ne și nouă, să știm, că atunci vom trata altfel subiectul zilei de astăzi.* Inclusiv propunerea domnului Anghel Stanciu, poate o vom trata altfel dacă renunțați la Programul de guvernare. / **On page 19, chapter VI, for instance at the research domain it says 1%, but I am asking you something else, according to which document you do not obey the government Programme. You took responsibility. Let's clearly establish which is your document by means of which you actually revoked, you repealed this decision, this government Programme. Are you going to give it up? Tell us, so that we know, because this way we are going to tackle differently the current topic from today. Including the proposal of Mr. Anghel Stanciu, maybe we are going to tackle it differently if you give up the government Programme.**

Sarcasm² or **mock politeness** is an impoliteness “super-strategy” in which the face-threatening act is produced with the help of politeness strategies that are not sincere,

transforming thus into surface realisations; this strategy is the opposite of the social harmony that is supposed to be promoted via the acts of Brown and Levinson's off-record politeness, a form of politeness that is meant to be ironic and is used for creating disputes and misunderstandings; it is the opposite of banter³, which represents mock impoliteness for creating social harmony. An example of mock politeness, however diminished, can be noticed in example (4), where B's reply is characterised by politeness at a surface level:

(4) A: Domnul Mihai Ungheanu: / Mr. Mihai Ungheanu:

Eu am să spun cât trebuie și așa cum trebuie pentru că dânsa a adresat două întrebări, nu a făcut dezbateri, iar eu am intrat pe dezbateri. / I am going to say as much as it is required and the way it is required because she asked two questions, she didn't have a debate, and I stated the debate session.

B: Domnul Teodor Viorel Meleşcanu: / Mr. Teodor Viorel Meleşcanu:

Domnule senator, / **Mister Senator,**

Dacă vreți să aveți în alt ton dreptate, ne faceți să pierdem vremea. Aveți dreptate, vă rog să continuați. / If you are keen on being right on a different voice, you make us waste our time. You are right, please go on.

The last type of the impoliteness "super-strategies" is **withholding the face-threatening acts**, a "super-strategy" represented by the lack of the politeness strategies where they are expected.

(5) A: Domnul Teodor Viorel Meleşcanu: / Mr. Teodor Viorel Meleşcanu:

Domnule senator Funar, îmi cer scuze dacă am spus că v-am făcut... mă rog, v-ați referit la faptul că v-am făcut deputat. Nu-mi aduc aminte, dar vă asigur foarte

solemn că, dacă ar fi fost după mine, nu v-aș fi făcut nici deputat, nici senator. (*Aplauze și râsete din partea dreaptă a sălii.*) Deci vă rog să nu credeți cumva că am făcut-o intenționat. [...] / **Mister Senator Funar, I apologize if I said I had called you... well, you referred to the fact that I had called you a Member of the Parliament. I don't remember, but I can solemnly assure you, that if I were to decide, I wouldn't have called you neither a Member of the Parliament nor a Senator. (Applauses and laughter from the right side of the hall). So, please, I wouldn't like you to believe I did it on purpose. [...]**

B: Domnul Gheorghe Funar: / Mr. Gheorghe Funar:

Vă mulțumesc, domnule președinte de ședință. / **Thank you, Mr. President.**

Regret că m-ați provocat. Dacă ar fi fost după dumneavoastră, domnule președinte de ședință, Tratatul cu Ungaria de acum 10 ani ar fi fost emasculat. Dacă ar fi fost după dumneavoastră, domnule președinte, n-ați fi votat la două mâini în Senatul României și să ajungeți să vă cerceteze Parchetul. Dacă ar fi fost după dumneavoastră, domnule președinte, n-ar fi ajuns o nepotă prea apropiată să voteze în Senatul României. Și, dacă ar fi fost după dumneavoastră, domnule președinte de ședință, atunci când erați președinte al APR-ului, nu l-ați fi înmormântat. / I feel sorry for your challenging me. If you were to decide, Mr. President, the Hungarian treaty would have been emasculated. If you were to decide, Mr. President, you wouldn't have voted with both hands in The Romanian Senate and you wouldn't have been interrogated by the prosecutor's office. If you were to decide, Mr. President, a close niece of yours wouldn't have

voted in the Romanian Senate. And, if you were to decide, Mr. Chairman, when you were president of APR, you wouldn't have buried it.

Eu sunt îngrijorat, domnule președinte, constatând că după 5 minute ați uitat ce ați spus. Ați fost obraznic față de mine, vă rog să vă cereți scuze. / **I am worried, Mr. President, because I can see that five minutes later you forgot what you had said. You were rude to me, please apologize.**

In this example, in the case of B's reply the presence of some politeness strategies is expected, taken into account the previous replies that are at a distance. Despite that, the reply is characterised by a total lack of these strategies and the level of impoliteness is the highest in this example. Verbal impoliteness in this example reaches a level that offers the necessary conditions for developing a conflictive type of communication.

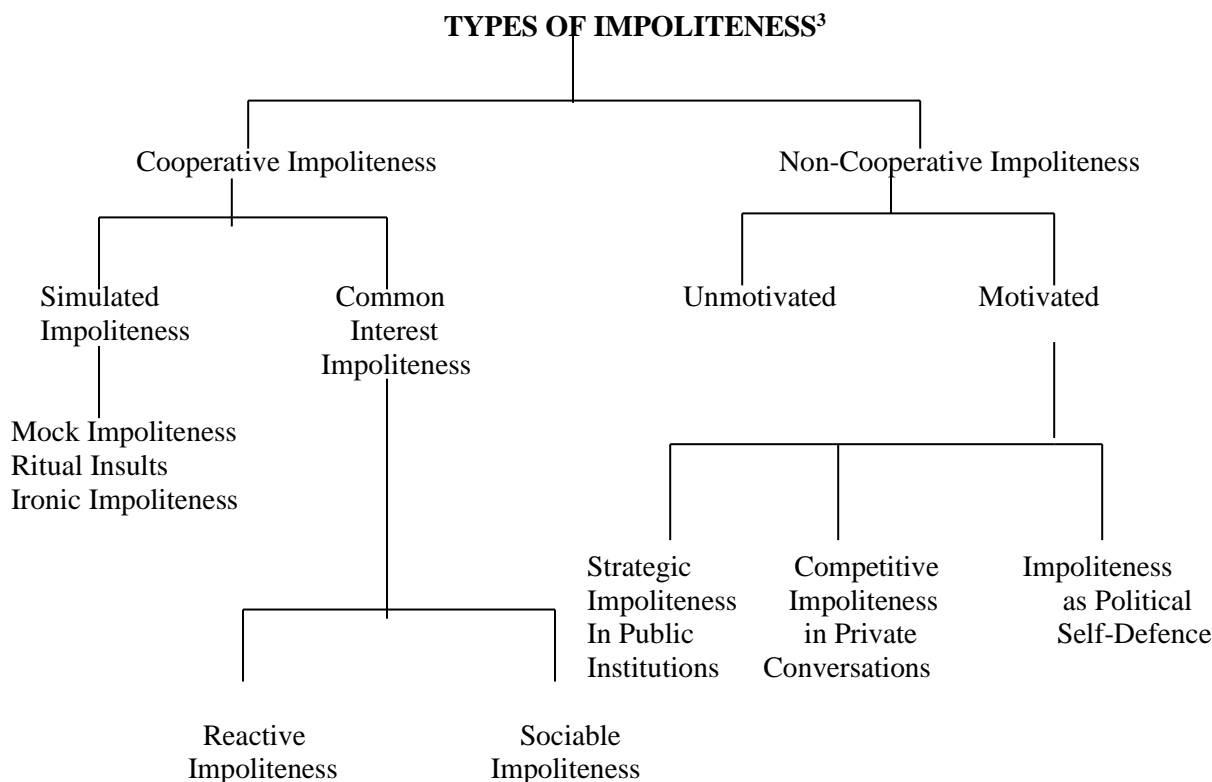
Culpeper's attempt is worth observing, taking into account the studies that existed before 1996. Manfred Kienpointner (1997: 251) does not agree with describing the impoliteness phenomenon as a mere deviation from the politeness theories or as a phenomenon that breaks rules and maxims of cooperative and polite communication. Phenomena such as politeness or impoliteness of a speech act are not a matter of degree or level; the impoliteness phenomenon cannot be observed as a simple secondary phenomenon derived from politeness; impoliteness is a type of non-cooperative prototypical behaviour, but it is not necessary that this behaviour should be entirely and permanently irrational or competitive, as we could observe from the previously analysed examples. Conflictive dialogue has its own typology, its own rules and strategies. In a similar way, politeness is a type of cooperative prototypical behaviour, but it is not necessary that this behaviour should be entirely and permanently rational, since there exist

types of speech act characterised by politeness that are less cooperative than they were supposed or intended to be; it is only at a high abstract level that the concepts and strategies of the existing politeness theories can be considered universal (for example the negative or positive face, the relationships of cost / benefit, power and social distance and verbal strategies derived from these concepts); the relative importance and prominence of these concepts and strategies and their impact on the actual politeness or impoliteness of speech acts can only be judged relative to verbal and situational contexts, to certain languages and cultures.

3. Types of impoliteness and studies dedicated to them

Researchers of conflict attributed to it certain names. Therefore, one can speak about quarrel, verbal duelling, tension, disputing, adversative episodes, conflict talk, verbal discord, oppositional argument, dialogical asymmetry or aggressiveness. Among these terms there are more or less differences.

The typology of conflictive dialogue and of impoliteness is not easy to be established, but, on the contrary, it raises problems to different linguists that have made such an attempt, because the borders of this phenomenon are not very well marked. One of the most complex typologies was proposed by Manfred Kienpointner in 1997:



The first division is made between **cooperative impoliteness** and **non-cooperative impoliteness**.

In the following analysis we are not going to deal with aspects concerning non-cooperative impoliteness, we are going to approach only the cooperative type of impoliteness. For a speech act expressing verbal disagreement to occur in such a way that it preserves social harmony, namely to be considered a speech act belonging to cooperative impoliteness, the author of every speech act should use partial agreement, colloquial language, the first person plural in order to redress the threat at the partner's negative face. The use of interrogations, of hesitations and of impersonal forms diminishes the threat that is brought to the partner's negative face. Alternatively, the speaker can use an indirect way of placing her/himself on a disagreement position, "disguising" disagreement among other speech acts (Brown and Levinson 1987: 69;

Searle 1975), even if the carried out research demonstrate that the way of being indirect itself does not equal politeness. This type of impoliteness is representative for a conversation from a talk-show television programme, a programme in which the moderator is Radu Moraru (B), and his guests are Mircea Dinescu (A) and Florin Călinescu (C). The last two are public figures between whom the social distance is little and there exists a great degree of affectivity among them. It is the case of all the participants, but especially A and C.

In its turn, cooperative impoliteness can be of two types: **simulated impoliteness** and **common interest impoliteness**.

Simulated impoliteness represents an important component of the conflictive discourse in general and it is a type of impoliteness that has rather the opposed effect, the effect of politeness. At this level of simulated cooperative impoliteness there can be made distinctions among three other types of impoliteness.

The first type is that of **banter**⁴ (Leech 1983: 144) or **mock impoliteness** and it is a type of impoliteness that represents a technique for creating a relaxed atmosphere. Especially if the social distance among the participants is little, mock impoliteness can be a means for implying that the relationship is so close and well-established that it cannot be endangered even by seemingly rude utterances. This type of impoliteness can be used even in formal circumstances, as it is the case for the television programme mentioned above, where its use can be risky, but even so, it can be successfully used to relax the tensioned atmosphere created by exaggerated strategies of negative politeness. These strategies are determined in their turn by huge differences of power and social distance, lack of emotion etc. An example of banter can be observed in example (6), where the moderator adopts a very close and familiar position to the two participants in order to create a relaxed atmosphere. The intonation of the participants to the

dialogue is only apparently characteristic for conflictive communication, in reality one can speak about “conflict for the sake of the conflict” in this example:

(6) **A:** ...vor curge râuri de lapte↑ vor fi↓ nu↓ nu se va-ntâmpla nimica↓ România va fi asta care e. / **rivers full with milk are going to flow, there are going to be, no, nothing is going to happen. Romania is going to be as it is.**

B: *domne' da↓ poate↓ stați un pic. da poate că: țara asta± io vă întreb sincer# sunteți mulțumiți dă: ă: ce se-ntâmplă sau ce s-a întâmplat în lunile astea? / man, but, maybe, wait a little. Maybe this country, I am asking you honestly, are you satisfied with what is going on or with what happened during these months?*

A: nu. păi cum să fii mulțumit? / **No. How could you be satisfied?**

B: păi când nu ești mulțumit↑ / **Well, when you are not satisfied**

C: păi stai mă că au loc (xxx) / **man, wait, there take place (xxx)**

A: care există vreme / **that exist for**

B: *domne' stați un pic. dacă-i întrebi pă parlamentari↓ că io nu sunt mulțumit de exemplu dă parlament↓ uite↓ am eu piticu ăsta↓[/ hey, wait a second, if you ask the Members of the Parliament, for I am not satisfied with the Parliament, look, I am obsessed with this issue[*

A: [n-o să fii niciodată / **[you are never going to be**

+B: *domne' credeți că vrea vreunu din parlament să se dea schimbat↑ niciodată domne. / man, do you believe that anyone from the Parliament will be willing to change? No, never.*

This mock impoliteness is the one that can lead in its turn to the second type of simulated cooperative impoliteness, namely the **ritual insults**, known in different languages and cultures

from across the world (North America, Turkey, Afro-American tribes), especially among young males.

Verbal duelling presupposes the competitive use of language, alive, intelligent and artistic conversation and everything takes place within a game structure which functions according to rules known only by the participants. The circumstances of the verbal duelling are typical public events, the participants have well-defined roles and most of the times, on the basis of socially accepted criteria, the winner and the loser are appointed. Although it can not be compared to a real verbal duelling, example (7) and the whole discussion show certain characteristics of one. Among the participants in this television programme there permanently takes place a so-called verbal duelling, characterised by an exchange of intelligent replies within the frame of a verbal game with very well-established rules, known by all the interlocutors. This “duelling” is one that is verbalised in terms of disagreement, but the insults are not present:

(7) C: treaba a fost așa↓ <L în CAMpania electorală băsescu a fost deasupra î# aşteptării> î# rezultatul obținut de el personal este peste aşteptările lui sigur că dacă și-a că și-a dorit să fie președinte dar nu cred că se aştepta să iasă președinte. în momentu ăla↓ toată povestea↓ goana aia scârboasă din decembrie după alianțe## / **things were like that. In the electoral campaign Băsescu was beyond expectations and the result obtained by him personally is beyond his expectations. Of course that if he, he wanted to be the president, but I don't think he expected to be the president. That moment, the whole story, that disgusting race for alliances in December**

A: de ce era scârboasă↑ nu: / **why was it disgusting? No.**

C: nu l-a făcut fericit↓ deci nu l-a făcut fericit <_R faptul că el a ieșit președinte și a trebuit să forțeze formarea guvernului până la treizeci decembrie> [/ **it didn't make him happy. So it didn't make him happy. The fact that he was elected president and he had to force the Government's formation by 30th December**[

A: *[stai mă, da el e președinte, el n-a făcut alianțe ca prim ministru]* / *[you, wait, he is the president, he didn't form alliances in the quality of a Prime Minister]*

B: *[nu da nu da stați un pic că știți↓ nu da întrebarea este că el]* / *[no, but, no, but, wait a moment, you know, no, but, the question is that he]*

A: *[un președinte este președintele și al scârboșilor care spui tu]* / *[a president is also the president of the disgusting persons that you mention]*

B: exact, exact / **exactly, exactly**

C: *păi stai mă, nu, mircea↓* / *well, wait, you, Mircea, wait*

A: *aicea greșești mă↓* / *man, you are wrong here*

The third type of simulated cooperative impoliteness is represented by the **ironic impoliteness**, which can be difficult to distinguish from ironic politeness. At the same time it is difficult to distinguish from its non-cooperative counterpart, sarcastic impoliteness. In principle, a distinction can be made between mildly ironic speech acts, which have the goal of teasing the hearer in an amusing way and thus contributing to the mutual entertainment in a conversation and biting sarcastic remarks, which hide a sharp attack against the face wants of the hearer under a seemingly polite surface. This distinction is based on the intention of speakers rather than the surface form of potentially ironic or sarcastic speech acts. In the following example the intention of the speakers is to provoke in a consciously amusing manner:

(8) **B:** bun↓ da' ce-i cu răpirea asta↓ domne? / **Well, mister, what about this kidnapping?**

C: <_Z nu mă bag↓> / **This is not my problem.**

A: <_Z de ce nu te bagi? >/ **Why isn't it your problem?**

C: da' nu mă interesează↓ nu cunosc subiectu [/ **Well, I'm not interested, I don't know about this**

A: [cum nu te intereseaza?]/ **How come you are not interested?**

C: au fost trei ziariști± păi da↓ aici chiar na↓ tre să fiu botoș ca să știu ce s-a întâmplat. / **They were three journalists. Well, in this case, I should be Botoș to know what happened.**

A: de ce↑ botoș habar n-are. / **Why? Botoș has no idea about it.**

C: și bășescu ne-a spus clar. păi serviciile secrete↓ puilor↓ / **And Bășescu told us clearly. Well, my sons, the Secret Services.**

A: a!Urea / **Nonsense.**

C: dă parcă e împușcarea lu /chenedi/ / **As if this was Kenedy's being shot.**

A: domne am scris↓ ieri am scris↓ vrei să# iar să mă refer ca tîmpitu la: [/ **Man, I wrote about it. I wrote yesterday. Would you like me to talk about it as a nitwit**

B: [da domne↓ da↓ / **Yes, man, yes.**

Behind A's replies from example (8) the willing irony is hidden and the attack at the addressee's face is an apparent one.

In its turn, common interest impoliteness can be reactive and sociable.

Reactive impoliteness is considered cooperative due to the fact that every participant in a conversation situated at the level of a relationship based on symmetry has the right to respond to previous personal attacks, at least as long as the reactions are moderate and remain adequate, that is, if they are not exaggerated. In this way, the balance of power in symmetrical interaction is restored and the appearance of a potential conflict is avoided. The same stands true for asymmetrical relationships, where the parties involved are not reactively rude to maintain an equivalence of power, but to prevent changes in the asymmetric distribution of power that might destabilize the relationship. Furthermore, if polite or over-polite formulations of a speaker lead to misunderstandings, it is in the interest of all participants in a conversation that the person speaks in a more direct way or even proceeds by stating matters quite bluntly. This fact develops the informative efficiency of interactive strategies towards a mutually accepted goal.

Paradoxically, reactive impoliteness can be used to repair the negative effects of some politeness strategies, namely misunderstandings due to unclear or ambiguous formulations. In example (9) the interlocutors address one another in a direct way and defend their point of view. Mircea Dinescu claims that the leaders of the Secret Services should stay unknown, whereas Florin Călinescu has a different opinion:

(9) A: așa↓ cu serviciile secrete? în orice țară din lume↓ șefii serviciilor secrete↑↓
nu știe nimeni ă: ă dacă-i bărbat↓ femeie↓ dacă arată↓ e bărb- cu barbă↓ cu
mustăți↓ adică↓ ce n-ai văzut când s- dau ăștia interviul↓ / **So, about the Secret
Services? In every country in the world, the leaders of the Secret Services,
nobody knows if it is a man or a woman, if they look, if they have a beard,
whiskers, but you saw it for yourself when they broadcast the interview**
C: *nu / No*

A: *numai în România* / **Only in Romania**

C: *sînt destul de cunoscuți* / *sînt cunoscuți* / *nu sînt* / *hai mă lasă-mă în pace* / **they are quite well-known, they are well-known, aren't they? Hey man, it's like that!**

B: *[agenții ăia care fac treabă nu sînt cunoscuți]* / **Those agents that work are not known**

C: *[nu* / *mircea* / *e cunoscut și]* / **No, Mircea, they are known**

A: *[băi asta e* / **Well, this is it.**

+C: *șeful CIA și șeful* / **The CIA leader and the leader**

A: *băi dacă da' cum se cheamă serviciile* / *astea? serviciile?* / **Well, if, but what is the name of these services? The**

C: *secrete.* / **Secret.**

A: *secrete* / *păi dacă e secret* / *de ce apar băi* / **Secret, well, if it is secret, why do they show up**

C: *[activitatea lor* / *băi* / **man, their activity**

+A: *tot timpul ca blondi și ca* / **All the time like Blondy and like**

C: *[nu nu* / *înțelegi greșit.* / **No, no, you misunderstand.**

+A: *copilu minune* / *la televizor* / *băi nene* / *tu ești cu chestiile subterane* / **Copilu Minune (The Wonder Boy) on TV, you, man, you are with the underground stuff.**

The reactions of the two interlocutors are moderate and they do not reach an aggravated verbal conflict. Frequent interruptions take place, but their role is to complete the discussion and not to create variance.

Social impoliteness is based on the fact that certain groups belonging to a community can have a positive attitude towards impoliteness in general. In this case, the strategies of social impoliteness can be even used as a means of expressing group identity and solidarity.

Deborah Schiffrin, in her study from 1984⁵, a study that was carried out as a result of the interviews she took in Philadelphia, in a lower-middle class urban neighbourhood, shows that Jewish couples tended to use strategies of communication which would be experienced as aggressive, non-cooperative behaviour by other groups of the Anglo-Saxon speech community: preference for disagreement, increased volume, rapid tempo, persistent attempts to get the floor (Schiffrin 1984: 318).

In example (10), the type of social impoliteness is represented by communication among media persons, among journalists. This communication is characterised by a rapid tempo, preference for verbal disagreement and interruptions. Verbal impoliteness in this case constitutes a means of expressing identity, equality and solidarity among the social group:

(10) A: asta a spus-o săracu și# țăriceanu↓ care e un om simpatic↓ mie mi se pare e un om delicat așa[/ **This was also said by Tăriceanu, who is a nice guy, he seems a delicate person to me[**

C: [singurul lucru care pare că l-a rezolvat / [**The only thing he seems to have solved**

A: știi ce-am scris eu aicea pentru mâine↑ în# pot să↑ n-arăt↑ n-am voie să arăt capul↑ / **Do you know what I have written here for tomorrow in# may I, I don't show, I am not allowed to show the head**

B: da domne↓ zii în gândul ce-ai scris↑ / **Yes, man, say it, what you wrote in Gîndul**

A: așa↓ în gândul. spuneam așa↓ / **Yes, in *Gîndul*, I was saying**

B: ce? / **What?**

A: călărind prea mult ă# călărind mult prea des motocicletă personală↓ domnul țăriceanu a pus duduital ce se aude în urma# SA pe seama economiei naționale↓ pentru că el stînd pe motocicletă și auzind duduital [/ **Riding too much, riding too often his personal motorbike, Mister Tăriceanu allotted the roaring that could be heard behind him to the national economy because he rode his motorbike and hearing the roaring**

C: [numai că marele (xxx) / **only that the great**

A: așa i s-a părut că <& duduie duduie economia> / **He thought that the economy was roaring.**

Although all the examples that were analysed are examples of cooperative impoliteness, this type of impoliteness does not only represent a phenomenon derived from that of politeness. Impoliteness has its own typology and cannot be considered just a phenomenon that breaks rules and maxims of polite communication. Regardless of the impoliteness type, this phenomenon is at the basis of every conflictive communication, but it is not necessary that this type of behaviour should be entirely and permanently competitive and irrational.

4. Conclusions

The study of the impoliteness theories and the study of conflict had as a starting point the theories of politeness since those have dominated the linguistic studies, especially those of pragmatics, for the last few decades. Starting with the criticism that was brought to the politeness

theories, newer research demonstrated that impoliteness is a complex phenomenon with its own typology.

By means of analysing some fragments from minutes that reproduce working sessions of the Romanian Senate, we were able to highlight the “super-strategies” of impoliteness, “super-strategies” that find themselves in opposition with those of politeness suggested by Brown și Levinson. Within the frame of the impoliteness phenomenon regarded as an independent phenomenon there were analysed representative dialogues for the cooperative type of impoliteness from a television programme.

In order to reach the conflictive type communication, a topic that integrates within the new trends of research in the domain of the current studies of pragmatics, verbal impoliteness is always the starting point.

NOTES:

¹ Concept that refers to the image of the interlocutor; see the politeness theories.

² Culpeper’s concept of sarcasm is close to Leech’s (1983) concept of irony. The Irony Principle is stated by Leech as following : “If you must cause offence, at least do so in a way which doesn’t overtly conflict with the Politeness Principle, but allows the hearer to arrive at the offensive point of your remark indirectly, by way of an implicature.” (Leech 1983: 82).

³ Kienpointner uses the term “rudeness”, but the term “impoliteness” is more appropriate in the economy of this study.

⁴ See Leech’s Banter Principle: “In order to show solidarity with the hearer, say something which is obviously untrue and obviously impolite to him and this will give rise to an interpretation such that what the speaker says is impolite to the hearer and is clearly untrue. Therefore what the speaker really means is polite to the hearer and true.” (Leech 1983: 144).

⁵ Jewish argument as sociability, in *Language and Society* 13, 3: 311-335, cited in Kienpointner 1997.

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