

# IMPOLITENESS AND IDENTITY IN THREADS ABOUT BRAZILIAN POLITICS ON TWITTER

## *IMPOLIDEZ E IDENTIDADE EM THREADS SOBRE A POLÍTICA BRASILEIRA NO TWITTER*

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to demonstrate how impoliteness is related to identity construction in threads on Twitter. For that, we analyze three threads about politics in Brazil, in which conflict and impoliteness occur. We draw on the discursive studies of (im)politeness (WATTS, 2003; MILLS, 2011, SPENCER-OATEY, 2002, 2005, 2007), the conventionalized formulae of impoliteness (CULPEPER, 2011), and the notions of identity and tactics of intersubjectivity (BUCHOLTZ; HALL, 2004a, 2004b, 2005). The results show that insults and other forms of impoliteness are associated with the identities constructed in the threads. They also indicate that the discursive study of impoliteness can shed some light on how aggression is set on social media.

**Keywords:** Impoliteness; Identity; Social Media

**Resumo:** O objetivo deste trabalho é demonstrar como a impolidez está relacionada à construção de identidades em threads no Twitter. Para tanto, nós analisamos três threads sobre a política brasileira, em que estão presentes o conflito e a impolidez. Baseamo-nos nos estudos discursivos da (im)polidez (WATTS, 2003; MILLS, 2011, SPENCER-OATEY, 2002, 2005, 2007), nas fórmulas convencionalizadas de impolidez (CULPEPER, 2011) e nas noções de identidade e táticas de intersubjetividade (BUCHOLTZ; HALL, 2004a, 2004b, 2005). Os resultados mostram que os insultos e outras formas de impolidez são associados às identidades construídas nos threads e indicam que os estudos discursivos da impolidez podem esclarecer como a agressão se configura nas mídias sociais.

**Palavras-chave:** Impolidez; Identidade; Mídias Sociais

## INTRODUCTION

The *Pesquisa Brasileira de Mídia* [Brazilian Media Research] (BRASIL, 2016) shows that the use of social media is increasing in the country. Politicians, regular users, and celebrities commonly use platforms like Twitter to discuss politics and other public topics. Oftentimes, these discussions are full of offenses, conflicts, and verbal violence due to different ideologies and points of view.

Recuero (2015) notices that, differently from face-to-face interactions, people in online environments tend to be geographically far from one another and that can make them less likely to notice or care about other people's instantaneous reactions. Therefore, online interactions can be a place for rudeness, verbal aggression, and hostility. Barreto Filho (2019), Barreto Filho *et al* (2019), and Barreto Filho and Barros (2021) studied how (im)politeness is set on Facebook, and Barreto Filho and Fernandes (forthcoming) investigated it on YouTube. In this paper, we observe the relationship between impoliteness and identities on Twitter.

This social networking website is famous for limiting the number of characters one can use in posts, which are called tweets. In the past, the limit of characters used to be 140, but now it is 280. However, these tweets can have other related tweets to form a thread.

Twitter has been commonly used to convey news quickly especially due to its short texts which make the reading really fast. It is also used by politicians to communicate rapidly with their audiences. The two right-wing presidents, Jair Bolsonaro from Brazil and Donald Trump from the USA, have been avid users of this social media platform, and there have been many controversial cases involving them.

Moreover, Conover *et al* (2021) also demonstrate how Twitter shapes the polarization in US politics, and we believe that their findings relate to the Brazilian context. Brazilian scholars have investigated the political polarization in Brazil (FREITAS, BOAVENTURA, 2018; MIGUEL, 2019; MACHADO; MISKOLCI, 2019), and we have noticed this polarization generally draws upon impoliteness and verbal aggression.

For that, we believe Twitter is a good source of data for our research on impoliteness and identity especially when the topic is politics. In this paper, we aim to analyze three threads to show how identity is constructed through impoliteness. The threads were initiated by three public figures in Brazil, two congresswomen and the former governor of São Paulo. We chose this sample because we have better access to the context of the tweets and that is ideal for our discursive analysis.

In this paper, the focus is to demonstrate how impoliteness and identity constructions are related. Thus, in sections 1 and 2 respectively, we discuss the notions of impoliteness and identity that we take for this study and present the analytical framework based on the discursive perspectives of impoliteness (WATTS, 2003; MILLS, 2011, SPENCER-OATEY, 2002, 2005, 2007), the conventionalized impoliteness formulae (CULPEPER, 2011) and the tactics of intersubjectivity (BUCHOLTZ; HALL, 2004a, 2004b, 2005). Finally, in section 3, we present our analysis and discuss the results.

## DISCURSIVE STUDIES OF (IM)POLITENESS

It is almost impossible to think of (im)politeness without mentioning Brown and Levinson's (1987) notable theoretical framework. Their studies inspired numerous researchers in the study of linguistic politeness, and they keep on inspiring data analysis around the world until nowadays. They were strongly influenced by classical theories of Pragmatics such as the Speech Act Theory (AUSTIN, 1962), the Cooperative Principle (GRICE, 1975), and Goffman's (1967) notion of face.

Brown and Levinson (1987) developed a framework that intends to be universal, and they present strategies through which people would avoid threats. According to Eelen (2001 p. 3), the two "central themes in their model are 'rationality' and 'face', which are both claimed to be universal". Rationality refers to a logic of means and ends so it implies speakers strategically organize their speech to reach their goals. Face refers to two opposing wants: the desire to be unimpeded and free (negative face); and the desire to be accepted by others (positive face).

In general, they explain that speakers use strategies of politeness whenever it is significant to avoid threats to either the positive or the negative face. One of the strengths of this model is that it provides a solid framework based on some linguistic-discursive choices that are associated with polite behavior and that emphasizes the place of language structures in the study of politeness.

Nevertheless, over the years, scholars have pointed out criticisms of their model and some of these criticisms have inspired changes in the field. Mills (2011) summarizes some of these criticisms, but we do not focus on all of them here because it is not the scope of our article. However, two of these criticisms are relevant to our purposes.

Firstly, Brown and Levinson (1987) focus primarily on the study of utterances instead of bigger portions of texts. This kind of approach provokes two consequences: the difficulty to work with the context and an excessive focus on the speaker. The context is mostly limited to what is provided by a sentence-like utterance, so it is hard to deal with social matters such as ideology, identity, historical factors, etc. Moreover, politeness in this case depends almost exclusively on the speaker, disregarding the comprehension process by the listener who might interpret the utterance differently.

The second criticism is about the definition of politeness itself. Culpeper (2011 p. 7) explains that scholars who take the discursive perspective emphasize that the definition of (im)politeness is subject to struggle, so we should focus on how ordinary people see (im)politeness, namely, how the term is conceived in the lay people's discourses. Thus, that goes against Brown and Levinson (1987) insofar as they propose a predictive theoretical framework based on what academics consider polite.

Concerning the definition of (im)politeness, Watts (2003 p. 8) states "that whether or not a participant's behavior is evaluated as polite or impolite is not merely a matter of the linguistic expressions that s/he uses, but rather depends on the interpretation of that behavior in the overall social interaction." Spencer-Oatey (2005 p. 97) maintains that (im)politeness is "the subjective judgments that people make about the social appropriateness of verbal and non-verbal behavior."

So these two definitions agree that (im)politeness is not inherent to a group of words and syntactic structures, but to people’s evaluations in the stream of social interaction.

Eelen (2001 p. 35) explains that “politeness involves what could be called an ‘evaluative moment’”, so one of the characteristics of (im)politeness is evaluativity. Hence, politeness refers to positive evaluations, and impoliteness refers to negative evaluations from his point of view.

The discursive perspective thereby represents the study of first-hand (im)politeness, namely, lay people’s notions of (im)politeness revealed in their discourse. Spencer-Oatey (2005 p. 95) maintains that (im)politeness is associated with “harmonious/conflictual interpersonal relations” that she labels as *rapport*. She explains that subjects dynamically manage the rapport, which can take different types of orientations, namely *enhancement*, *maintenance*, *neglect*, and *challenge*. These two last are closely related to impoliteness, so they are the focus of our analysis.

Spencer-Oatey (2005) points out that the rapport is not preconceived, it is managed throughout the interaction and it depends on the interlocutors’ expectations. (Im)politeness is thereby not attached to language structures so the analysis of the co-text, text, and context must be taken into account, as Culpeper and Hardaker (2017) pointed out.

Although the focus of the discursive analysis is not on the linguistic choices themselves, the speakers rely on conventionalized ways to cause impoliteness. Therefore, we draw on the conventionalized impoliteness formulae (CULPEPER, 2011 p. 135) to address the relationship between impoliteness and language form. This framework, in Chart 1, was developed by corpora analysis of discourses where impoliteness is central (CULPEPER; HARDAKER, 2017 p. 211), so they are not solely theoretical constructs like the strategies of face-attack (CULPEPER, 1996). They are based on the ritual use of language in impolite settings.

Chart 1: Conventionalized Impoliteness Formulae

<b>Impoliteness formulae type</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Insult (Personalized negative vocatives)	you fucking moron
Insult (Personalized negative assertions)	you are such a bitch
Insult (Personalized negative references)	your little arse
Insult (Personalized third-person negative references in the hearing of the target)	the daft bimbo
Pointed criticisms/complaints	that is total crap
Challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions	why do you make my life impossible
Condescensions	that’s being babyish
Message enforcers	listen here
Dismissals	fuck off
Silencers	shut the fuck up
Threats	I’m going to bust your fucking head off if you touch my car
Curses and ill-wishes	fuck you

Source: Culpeper and Hardaker (2017 p. 212)

The occurrence of any formulaic expression of impoliteness displayed in the chart does not assure that there is impolite behavior. Nonetheless, it potentially indicates impoliteness. To be sure that there is impoliteness in a certain interaction, it is necessary to scrutinize the interactional context of use along with co-text. Barreto Filho and Barros (2021) demonstrated how the formulae type can be associated with identities in discourse so that they can serve to index a social group's ideology. In the next section, we deal with the notion of identity taken in this article.

## IDENTITIES AND INTERACTION

The notion of identity we take in this work is also interactional and discursive likewise the concept of impoliteness from the discursive perspective. Therefore, here we advocate that identity is not essentialist, in other words, we deny that identities rely solely on demographic characteristics or the individual psyche.

Although many studies on (im)politeness did not address the notion of identity explicitly, some scholars investigated the intersection between politeness and nationality (BLUM-KULKA et al 1989; BLUM-KULKA, 1992), and politeness and gender (HOLMES, 1994). Nonetheless, the lack of discussion on the definition of identity can provoke some kind of essentialist views on social groups, as if there was an essence in being a man, woman, or from a country. The problem with that is to create overgeneralized conclusions about a group of people, such as “women are more polite than men” or “a nationality uses more politeness strategies than others”. This kind of approach might privilege the external observer's point of view (BUCHOLTZ; HALL, 2004a), which might reverberate relations of powers and mainstream ideologies.

An alternative to this approach is to consider identity as a social and interactional construct that is flexible and adaptable to the context. Wodak (2011 p. 216) points out that “[i]dentities are always re/created in specific contexts. They are co-constructed in interactive relationships. They are usually fragmented, dynamic and changeable – everyone has multiple identities.” Bucholtz and Hall (2005 p. 585) also defend the “identity as a relational and socio-cultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction rather than as a stable structure located primarily in the individual psyche”.

Thereupon, identities are not fixed categories where people are inherently placed, they are taken as “both unstable and temporarily stabilized by social practice and regular predictable behavior” (BAKER; GALASINSKI, 2001 p. 31). Regarding these principles, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) present a framework that aims at encompassing both language features and key points in culture and society. They claim their approach is based on *Sociocultural Linguistics*, which is an interdisciplinary subfield that accounts for principles in Sociolinguistics, Linguistic Anthropology, Discourse Analysis, and linguistically oriented Social Psychology.

Their framework is based on five principles (BUCHOLTZ; HALL, 2005):

Emergence principle: the identity is better understood as a construct that emerges from

linguistic and multisemiotic practices, instead of a pre-constructed source. Hence, it is a social and cultural phenomenon.

- Positionality principle: not only do identities comprehend demographic categories (age, gender, nationality, ethnicity) but also local positions and ethnographic specificities of groups.
- Indexicality principle: identities are indexed by several processes such as
  - (a) overt mention of identity categories and labels; (b) implicatures and presuppositions regarding one's own or others' identity position; (c) displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles; and (d) the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups. (BUCHOLTZ; HALL, 2005 p. 594)
- Relationality principle: identities are constructed by complementary and intersubjective relations, which generally overlap. They are called tactics of intersubjectivity: "similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority and delegitimacy." (BUCHOLTZ; HALL, 2005 p. 598)
- Partialness principle: any identity construction is partial. It is in part intentional, in part habitual, and hardly ever fully conscious. It is also partly the product of interaction and partly a product of social representation and other discourses. Thus, no identity description is capable of totally comprehending a social group.

Although all of these principles are important for this framework, we focus on the principles of indexicality and relationality in this paper, due to the purposes of our analysis and space constraints. Garcés-Conejos Blitvich and Sifianou (2017) defend that indexicality is a must when studying the relationship between language and identity. Garcés-Conejos Blitvich and Sifianou (2017 p. 234) summarize that "[a]n index is a sign in which the signified is inherently connected to the signifier (smoke to fire, for example)." In the study of identity and discourse, some linguistic-discursive elements might indicate certain identities. Barreto Filho *et al* (2019) showed that certain insults can indicate political identities. For example, in Brazil, if somebody insults someone else as a "bolsominion<sup>1</sup>", the speaker probably identifies themselves with the left-wing parties ideologies rather than right-wing ideology.

Therefore, the formulae of impoliteness in the discourse can be indexes that contribute to identity construction. Moreover, the way people take offense might also be an index for identity construction in impolite interactions. Barreto Filho (2019) demonstrated that on social media people often make criticisms that are not directed to one person in particular, but some people

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1. *bolsominion* is composed of two roots: "bolso" that refers to the right-wing politician Jair Bolsonaro, and "minion" which means a servile follower or subordinate. This is commonly used as an insult in Brazil.

take offense because they identify themselves as being part of that group. In Barreto Filho's (2019) data, many conflicts were initiated by criticisms towards political groups, but several people who identified themselves as members of those groups took offense and replied aggressively. He defended that this process was like the idiom "if the shoe fits, wear it".

Another pivotal aspect of studying identity construction in discourse is the relational principle. This is particularly important for our purposes here because we analyze impoliteness, which generally involves conflicts. Oftentimes, these conflicts do not only involve individual issues. On the contrary, the conflict between opposing identities is generally present in online discussions on social media and that includes multiple participants and collective matters. We hardly ever see opinions without counterarguments in threads on Twitter, especially in the ones initiated by public figures, and these opposing points of view are often accompanied by impoliteness and verbal aggression.

Bucholtz and Hall (2005) maintain that identity only exists in relation to others, in other words, they are always relational. Traditionally, the relationship between identities is explained by the notions of sameness and difference, but the authors believe this single axle is insufficient and oversimplified to account for the relationships amongst identities. Bucholtz and Hall (2004a, 2004b, 2005) propose three tactics of intersubjectivity to grasp the complexity involved in identity relations; they are *adequation* and *distinction*; *authentication* and *denaturalization*; *authorization* and *illegitimation*.

The first axle - *adequation* and *distinction* - is connected to the idea of sameness and difference, however, in this framework, it is the emphasis on similarities or differences that is at play. The *adequation* is seen as the discursive effort to emphasize the similarities of two elements of the group. For people to be seen as sharing the same identity, they cannot be equal - otherwise, they would not be different people - so the *adequation* takes place when the similarities are emphasized, while the differences are hidden or undermined. On the other hand, *distinction* takes place when the differences are accentuated, whereas similarities are silenced.

The second pair - *authentication* and *denaturalization* - refers to the "processes by which speakers make claims to realness or artifice, respectively" (BUCHOLTZ; HALL, 2005 p. 601). Thereupon, *authentication* happens when it is claimed that an element or someone of a given identity is actually treated as genuine. However, *denaturalization* takes place when an element or a person is claimed to be artificial or fake.

Finally, the third axle - *authorization* and *illegitimation* - is closely related to relations of power. On the one hand, *authorization* is the process by which certain identities are claimed to be accepted. On the other hand, *illegitimation* takes place when an identity is silenced, disregarded, or even ignored. Thus, these two notions are associated with institutionalized power relations, albeit also possible with local power relations.

Bucholtz and Hall (2004b p. 505) point out that, although the tactics are presented separately, "intersubjective relations are far more often multiple than singular". Thus, oftentimes more than one tactic might be at play in the analysis of interactions. As the authors also did, we analyze the data here focusing on one tactic at a time, but it is not to imply that tactics happen separately. Our

purpose is to better show the relation between impoliteness and each tactic in identity construction.

## IMPOLITENESS AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN THREADS ON TWITTER

In this section, we analyze three threads from Twitter. Threads have an initial tweet and are followed by replies and also replies of replies. The length of the threads is potentially infinite inasmuch as social media users are able to reply to the tweets as long as the initial tweet is not deleted or censored.

Social media websites contribute to the existence of polylogues, that is, interactions that are composed of more than two participants. In fact, social media interaction generally involves thousands of participants especially when initiated by public figures' tweets. For that reason, we analyze the initial tweet and a few replies to discuss the relationship between impoliteness and identity construction.

We leave the names of public figures, but we omit ordinary users' names and other personal information for ethical reasons. However, all tweets that are brought here are public and available for anyone who has access to the internet. Thus, we do not need any previous authorization from the users or our institutional Ethical Committee.

This section is divided into three subsections, one for each axle of the tactics of intersubjectivity. Our analysis consists of identifying why that interaction is considered impolite, verifying if there are any conventionalized impoliteness formulae (CULPEPER, 2011), pointing out which identity indexes are used, and demonstrating how the tactics of intersubjectivity (BUCHOLTZ; HALL, 2004a, 2004b, 2005) take place and are related to impoliteness.

### *Adequation and Distinction*

The thread in Excerpt 1 is initiated by a tweet by the Brazilian politician Geraldo Alckmin. At the time of this publication, he was involved in controversy because he was announced as Lula<sup>2</sup>'s vice president to run for the Brazilian presidential elections in 2022. Nevertheless, for 33 years, Alckmin was part of PSDB (Brazilian Social Democratic Party), a political party that is a historical opponent of Lula's PT (Workers' Party), until 2021 when he joined PSB (Brazilian Socialist Party). This change of parties made a lot of his followers surprised and uncomfortable as seen in the comment of User 1, who is using conventionalized impoliteness formulae (CULPEPER, 2011), such as the *pointed complaint* "what a shame" (line 17) and the *insult* "bandits" (line 18) towards Lula and his supporters.

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2. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was the president of Brazil from 2003 to 2011. He is generally associated with the left-wing ideology.



Excerpt 1

<p>01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15 16</p>	<p><b>Geraldo Alckmin:</b> Giving up on Brazil is not an option. We're together @LulaOficial! #Let'sGoTogetherForBrazil</p>	<p><b>Geraldo Alckmin:</b> Desistir do Brasil não é uma opção. Estamos juntos @LulaOficial! #VamosJuntosPeloBrasil</p>
<p>17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44</p>	<p><b>User 1:</b> What a shame to be allied with bandits. <b>User 2:</b> Yes. He has already allied with Aécio. After VAZA JATO he learned. <b>User 3:</b> The good ones should follow me @User 3 BRBRBRI'll follow back BRBRBRBR [Image: "it would be more profitable if the governor [Alckmin] explained the embezzlement in the subway construction and school meals." Lula - 2016 (next to Lula's picture in green) "After making Brazil bankrupt, Lula says that he wants to go back to power. That is, he wants to go back to the crime scene." - Alckmin - 2017 (next to Alckmin's picture in yellow) The context above corresponds to A. Two corrupts B. Two politicians who deserve each other C. Two despicable people D. All alternatives are correct (next to João Lima's picture, below the two quotes)] <b>User 1:</b> Yeah... in 2018 it was like this, they traded barbs and now they get along, none of them are good.</p>	<p><b>Usuária 1:</b> Q vergonha se aliar a bandido. <b>Usuária 2:</b> Sim. Ele já foi aliado de Aécio. Depois da VAZA JATO aprendeu <b>Usuária 3:</b> Sigam-me os bons @Usuária3 BRBRBRBRseguirei de voltaBRBRBRBR  <b>Usuária 1:</b> Pois é... em 2018 foi assim, esta troca de farpas e agora se uniram, nenhum dos dois prestam.</p>

User 2 seems not to agree with User's 1 stance insofar as she classifies Aécio as a bandit. Aécio Neves is one of the leaders of PSDB so User 2 implies that Alckmin was allied with bandits before and now he has learned not to be. This shows that User 2 took User's 1 insult and redirected it to PSDB. Thus, this interaction presents impoliteness, despite the content of the initial tweet not being impolite.

User 2 also shows some identity indexes that she is a supporter of Lula and the Workers' Party, firstly her stance against PSDB and secondly the use of "VAZA JATO". This term is a play of

words with the Car Wash operation, which was an inquiry of the Brazilian Federal Police that aimed at investigating embezzlement involving politicians and Brazilian public companies like Petrobras. The term Car Wash refers to the place where suspects met according to the investigators. This operation had a significant impact on the political history of Brazil and triggered different reactions according to people's political ideologies. Lula's supporters generally advocate that the operation purposely targeted some politicians to favor others, especially because Lula was incarcerated during the 2018 presidential election and that prevented him from running for president. This decision was taken by judge Sérgio Moro, who worked in the Car Wash operation and later took office as the Minister of Justice from January 2019 to April 2020 during the administration of Jair Bolsonaro who won the elections in 2018.

Amongst all the accusations against Moro was a scandal known as "VAZA JATO", which is composed of the words "vaza", an abbreviation of *vazamento* (leak), and "jato" that refers to the Car Wash (*Lava-jato* in Portuguese) operation. This event happened when alleged hackers leaked cell phone text messages that showed how Moro was biased during his work in the Car Wash operation. All these historical events show why the use of the term "VAZA JATO" entails an identity construction as Lula's supporter.

On the other hand, User 3 uses indexes of Lula's opponent. Firstly, her opinion on Lula and Alckmin expressed by the Infographic she shared shows that she categorizes both politicians as corrupt. The use of offensive language is also seen in this case by the means of *insults* such as corrupt (line 35) and despicable (line 38). Secondly, the use of the Brazilian flags (lines 22 and 23) indexes opposition to Lula, because, in current political debates in Brazil, the flag is seen as a symbol of support for president Jair Bolsonaro, who evokes nationalist symbols to claim his opponents are communists.

In terms of the *tactics of intersubjectivity*, the three users show a discursive effort to *adequate* and *distinguish* the two politicians in the identity of corrupt politicians, especially users 2 and 3. User 1 identifies Lula and his supporters as corrupt by using the insult bandits to refer to them. Geraldo Alckmin in this case is not explicitly considered a bandit, but someone who allies with them. On the other hand, User 2 distinguishes Lula and the Workers' Party from PSDB, she affirms that Alckmin's former party is corrupt by mentioning one of its leaders, Aécio Neves. User 3 is the one who uses *adequation* to highlight the corruption that would make both Lula and Alckmin similar.

This interaction shows the construction of three different points of view that represent political identities. User 1 positions herself as someone disappointed in Alckmin's alliance with PT; User 2 shows support to Lula; and User 3 uses adequation to position Lula and Alckmin in the same group, besides she also calls User 1 to follow her and shows her support to president Jair Bolsonaro with the Brazilian flags that index the nationalism he advocates.

Excerpt 1 shows how political identities are constructed through impolite discourses that demonstrate the user's stances, especially according to whom they direct their insults and criticisms. The analysis of impoliteness also shows how political identities are relational in public online interactions, such as this thread on Twitter.

Excerpt 2 is a tweet written by the Brazilian conservative Congresswoman Carla Zambelli. She is one of Bolsonaro’s supporters in congress and she constantly shows disagreement with the feminist agenda. This tweet shares the news about a project that aims at criminalizing stares with a sexual connotation. In the picture is Senator Rose de Freitas, the author of the project.

Excerpt 2

00		
02		
03		
04		
05		
06	<b>Carla Zambelli:</b>	<b>Carla Zambelli:</b>
07	I think these “women” want to end human	Eu acho que essas “mulheres” querem acabar com a
08	reproduction, it’s not possible.	reprodução humana, não é possível.
09	Who is going to determine if there is or	Quem vai determinar se existe ou não conotação
10	there isn’t a sexual connotation? Will there	sexual? Teremos os checadores de olhar? A
11	be gaze checkers? The condemnation	condenação se dará através de uma foto, vídeo ou
12	will be done based on a picture, video, or	testemunha.
13	witness.	É muita falta do que fazer mesmo.
14	They really have nothing better to do.	
15	[News headline: Harassment: stares with	
16	sexual connotation can be criminalized]	
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This tweet can be considered impolite and aggressive because Zambelli not only showed her disagreement but also attempted to offend the author and supporters of the bill about the criminalization of stares with a sexual connotation. She used conventionalized impoliteness formulae such as the *pointed criticisms* in lines 2, 3, and 8. Moreover, she questions the authenticity of the women who support the bill insofar as she writes “women” between inverted commas in line 02.

The usage of inverted commas also shows the attempt to provoke impoliteness because it challenges the authenticity of these women. Therefore, that is an example of *denaturalization*, that is, the discursive effort to question the authenticity of someone as belonging to a social identity. Considering the use of the plural form of “women” and Zambelli’s conservative and anti-feminist behavior, we notice that the *denaturalization* performed by the congresswoman does not only comprehend the author of the bill or some supporters but all feminists. The use of intersubjective tactics to cause impoliteness is a common way of attacking social groups online following Barreto Filho’s (2019), and Barreto Filho and Barros’s (2021) findings.

This thread was initiated by Congresswoman Joice Hasselmann, who used to be one of Bolsonaro's supporters. They both belonged to the same political party (PSL) in the Brazilian elections in 2018. Due to her support for Bolsonaro, she was considered a representative of the far-right conservative ideology in Brazil and so are many of her followers on Twitter. Nevertheless, Hasselmann and Bolsonaro broke up in 2019 amid divergences in PSL and suspicions of embezzlement, and both of them left PSL after a while. Thereafter, Hasselmann, Bolsonaro, and his sons, who are also politicians, started many conflicts online, especially on Twitter. Some of these interactions were already analyzed by Rodrigues and Barreto Filho (2020).

The conflicts on Twitter are hardly ever limited to individual issues. Hence, the offenses and the process of taking offense generally involve many people and political ideologies. In excerpt 3, Hasselmann attacks two politicians who are generally identified as opposing sides in Brazilian politics: former president Lula and president Bolsonaro. From lines 2 to 5, she uses sarcasm to equate Lula with Bolsonaro, and she implies that both use other people to justify their bad deeds.

In lines 6 and 7, she directly addresses their supporters by using the insult "suckers", which implies naiveness and lack of critical sense. In this way, Hasselmann attacks both sides of the political ideologies in Brazil. By attacking Lula, she offends what is generally seen as the left-wing ideology; also she offends the right-wing ideology by insulting Bolsonaro and his supporters. The replies we brought for the analysis, in excerpt 3, show how users use *authorization* and *illegitimation* to construct the identity of right-wing and left-wing supporters.

Excerpt 3

<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p>	<p><b>Joice Hasselmann:</b> Lula da Silva’s family investigated: “It’s his friend’s fault” Bolsonaro’s family investigated: “It’s Witzel’s fault”. And there are suckers, on both sides, who believe and defend them.</p>	<p><b>Joice Hasselmann:</b> Família Lula da Silva investigada: “A culpa é do amigo” Família Bolsonaro investigada: “A culpa é do Witzel”. E têm trouxas, dos dois lados, que acreditam e defendem.</p>
<p>8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35</p>	<p><b>User 1:</b> Ask votes for the Left darling. From the Right, you’ll not have any. <b>User 2:</b> That’s wrong, she won’t get votes from the bolsonarist cattle, but from the rational Right she will, mine she’ll have even for president if she needs. Bolsonaro, never again, and with his sons, no fucking way. <b>User 3:</b> Until she betrays this “Right”. <b>User 4:</b> haha it’s better to be called cattle than to be moderate to “dialogue” with the Left, Argentina made it clear what happens when the “moderate Right” gains power, it opens the way for the Left to fuck the whole country [Image: The new catchphrase of the new Left is “I don’t have a pet politician” This can only work in the head of functional illiterates that don’t know pet[esteem]<sup>1</sup> means and of people who don’t have a sense of proportion, that put Lula and Bolsonaro in the same box. Don’t you esteem the president?]</p>	<p><b>Usuário 1:</b> Peça voto pra esquerda querida. Da direita você não tem nenhum. <b>Usuário 2:</b> Errado, não tem voto do gado bolsonarista, da direita racional ela tem, o meu tem até pra presidente se precisar. Bolsonaro, nunca mais, com esses filhos aí, nem ferrando. <b>Usuária 3:</b> Ate ela trair essa “direita” <b>Usuária 4:</b> kk melhor ser chamado de gado do que de moderado por querer “dialogar” com a esquerda, a Argentina já deixou claro o que acontece quando a “direita moderada” ganha o poder ou seja, abre caminho pra esquerda foder o país inteiro</p>

User’s 1 tweet (lines 8 to 10) does not seem to be offensive regarding only the language structure. However, the tweet is sarcastic insofar as it doubts Halssemann’s adequacy to be a right-wing representative. User 1 attempts to identify the congresswoman as someone who does not belong to the Right, so she would have to move to the Left to get any votes in the future. This can be understood as offensive because Hasselmann has been traditionally identified as a right-wing politician.

The use of the address term “darling” in line 8 also shows sarcasm. Although User 1 apparently tries to create a friendly atmosphere, she actually means to challenge Hasselman’s identity as a right-wing politician. The use of polite language to covertly provoke impoliteness sarcastically is referred to as *polirudeness* (REETZ, 2015; CHIARI, 2016).

This reply starts a discursive dispute that attempts to *illegitimate* certain members of the right-wing identity. This also illustrates the partialness principle proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), because User 2 categorizes the Right into two groups: the bolsonarist cattle (line 8) and the

rational Right (line 12). Therefore, she shows two local positions within the right-wing identity.

The words User 2 chooses to address these local positions also show which attributes are worthy in the political milieu from her point of view. “Bolsonarist cattle” is a conventionalized insult that refers to Bolsonaro’s supporters and implies that they follow their leader without actually thinking about it. Two of the insults used to refer to Bolsonaro’s supporters - bolsominion and cattle - show that consciousness and critical thinking are two worthy attributes in the political milieu. Thus, people use insults that implicate the lack of these attributes to offend other identities. The term “rational Right” (line 12) also illustrates how consciousness is a worthy attribute in User 2’s perspective, because she highlights it when referring to the group she supports.

User’s 2 tweet illustrates how *authorization* and *illegitimation* work. She *illegitimizes* Bolsonaro’s supporters by insulting them as “cattle” and *authorizes* other members of the “rational Right”, highlighting consciousness as a worthy attribute. Thus, the analysis of impoliteness and the tactics of intersubjectivity can show how the identities are indexed by insults and which attributes are addressed to offend.

User 4 also uses *illegitimation* in order to cause offense, but he says it is better to be cattle than to be associated with the Left. So his strategy is to *illegitimate* the allegedly “moderate Right” also questioning their consciousness by claiming they can be manipulated by the Left. Likewise, User 3 also questions their consciousness by claiming Hasselmann will eventually also betray them, so they are not conscious of her agenda.

## CONCLUSION

The above analysis illustrates how impoliteness works in the identity construction in online interactions about Brazilian politics on Twitter. Thus, we advocate that both identities and impoliteness are constructed through discourse and are not inherent to people or language structures. This indicates that impoliteness studies can shed light on issues that are not limited to Pragmatics itself but are also interrelated to political and ideological matters such as political polarization in Brazil.

Internet users use tactics of intersubjectivity (BUCHOLTZ; HALL, 2004a, 2004b, 2005) to attack or defend their political identities and points of view. The attack on identities also affects the process of taking offense to the extent that people feel the need to respond to offenses that are not necessarily directed to themselves as individuals, but to groups to which they belong. This factor increases participation and engagement in social media, so impolite language generally targets attributes of groups of people rather than individuals.

Therefore, we advocate the need for more studies on the relationships between impoliteness and identities, as Garcés-Conejos Blitvich and Sifanou (2017) also do. We believe that can be achieved by studying impoliteness discursively and taking into account people’s evaluations of discourses that are revealed in social interaction.

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