

Polarization of Lithuanian Society on Issues Related to Language Politics

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Abstract : The goal of this paper is to reveal how polarization is constructed through the use of impoliteness strategies. In general, media helps to spread various ideas very fast, and it means that processes of polarization are best revealed in computer-mediated communication (CMC) contexts. For this reason, data for the research was collected from online texts about a current, very diverse topic in Lithuania - Lithuanian language policy and regulations, because this topic is causing a lot of tension in Lithuanian society. Computer-mediated communication allows users to edit their message before they send it. It means that addressees carefully select verbal expressions to convey their message. In other words, each impoliteness strategy and its verbal expression were created intentionally. Impoliteness strategies in this research are understood as various ways to reach a communicative goal: belittle the other. To reach the goal, the public opinions of various Lithuanian public figures (e. g., cultural people, politicians, officials) were collected from new portals in 2019-2023 and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. First, problematic aspects of the language policy, for which public figures complain, were identified. Then instances when public figures take a defensive position were analyzed: how they express this position and what it reveals about Lithuanian culture. Findings of this research demonstrate how concepts of impoliteness theory can be applied in analyzing the process of polarization in Lithuanian society on issues related to the State language policy. Also, to reveal how polarization is constructed, these tasks were set: a) determine which impoliteness strategies are used throughout the process of creating polarization, b) analyze how they were expressed verbally (e. g., as an advice, offer, etc.).

Keywords : impoliteness, Lithuanian language policy, polarization, impoliteness strategies

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