

## LINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF POLITICAL INVECTIVE

Malwina Dankiewicz, M.A.<sup>1</sup>

Radosława Rodasik, M.A.<sup>2</sup>,

Aleksandra Skórzak, B.A.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Jagiellonian University

### ABSTRACT

The paper presents the problem of security culture in the public communication, especially in political invective.. The sources of aggressive language in political life, the specificity of political invective and linguistic means for insulting political opponent were presented. There were described the social and ethical consequences of using aggressive linguistic means against a political opponent. Verbal fencing, and often brutal battle of words have been written in the ritual of governance, which involves a more or less excited listeners, readers, viewers, because for them the language games are organized.

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Communication is a term of many definitions. To communicate is usually understood as a transmission – that is an information transfer in a very broad meaning (idea, emotion and skill transfer). Communication is also comprehension – a process, whereby we understand others and try to be understood by them, in other words a process whereby two people accomplish same thoughts and feelings. Communication might be also understood as an effect, all the means used to influence one person b another or use of signs and symbols to exercise power. It can also be defined as connecting – a process that connects a noncontinuous parts of our living surroundings or creating a social integrity of individuals by using language or signs - but also as a social interaction by means of symbols, an exchange of meaning between

people possible equally to their common observations, desires and attitude. Communication is also specified as a part of a social process – communicative act is a mean by which a group standard is expressed, social control is applied, roles are assigned, coordination of efforts are accomplished, expectations are revealed and the entire social process is transferred.<sup>1</sup>

Social communication is a process of creation, transformation and transfer of information between individuals (interpersonal communication), groups or social organizations. The purpose of social communication is forming, modification or change of knowledge, attitude and behavior accordingly to interest and values of recipient

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<sup>1</sup> W. Pisarek, *O mediach i języku*, Kraków 2007, pp. 15-27.

and addresser.<sup>2</sup> Interpersonal communication is a process of information transfer between two people or a small group of people, that results in a specific actions and feedback<sup>3</sup>, whereas political communicates is a space on which various views and standpoints of three groups of actors that have rights to public expression in political matters meets. Those actors are politicians on one hand and public opinion on the other. In between there is a third group – journalists.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, communication language based on political inwektywie threatens social security and safety culture. As stated Juliusz Piwowarski:

- “1. Phenomenon of security is for a certain individual or collective entity:
  - Desired state without danger or state of satisfying level of control over the threats to the existence of this entity;
  - Value that meet our needs of lack (basic needs) an higher needs (needs of development – i.e. metaneeds) with self-realization at the top of the hierarchy of needs;
  - Process of development, which is a metaneed and allows for personal and social increase of the potential that rises the autonomic defense of subjects of security;
  - Social construct that is a result of social bond, interdependence, and interactions in certain human collectivity, which is one of subjects of security.
2. Security culture of any specified individual or collective entity is a phenomenon that enables to accomplish following objectives:

- 1) Efficient control over possible threats to certain entity, which results in an optimal state of danger to this entity (in certain time and place);
- 2) Restoring security of certain subject when it was lost;
3. Optimization of levels of multi-sectorally formed and examined process of development of security subject, which aims to harmonization of sectors in the context of prioritizing goals of the entity;
4. Efficient stimulation of consciousness of higher need in both social and individual scale – i.e. the need of self-fulfillment and creation of trichotomous development – a) mental, b) social, and c) material due to supporting beliefs, motivations and attitudes that cause individual and collective actions, which have influence on the increase of potential of autonomic defense (self-defense) of individual and group subjects of security.”<sup>5</sup>

It follows from the above definitions political invective can be classified as one of the factors affecting the sense of safety culture.

Political invective is a linguistic action by which addresser express negative feeling towards recipient and depreciate him at the same time. It is displayed in the negative emotional characterization of the statement evaluating recipient (his actions, expertise and attitude) and in assessment of the whole of actions rather than exact acts and their results, and so the aggressive statement usually is a negative assessment of everything that concerns the recipient.<sup>6</sup> According to I. Kamińska-Szumaj verbal aggression is unloading anger, wrath, outrage

<sup>2</sup> D. McQuail, *Teoria komunikowania masowego*, Warszawa 2012, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Komunikowanie polityczne i publiczne*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 65-68.

<sup>4</sup> M. Karwat, *O złośliwej dyskredytacji*, Warszawa 2007.

<sup>5</sup> J. I. Piwowarski, *Fenomen bezpieczeństwa. Pomiędzy zagrożeniem a kulturą bezpieczeństwa*, Kraków 2014, pp. 20-21, 44-47.

<sup>6</sup> T. Goban – Klas, *Media i komunikowanie masowe: teorie i analizy pras, radia, telewizji i Internetu*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 293-294.

and other negative emotions towards surroundings as a result of hostile attitude. invective are i.e. insult, affront, indignity, depreciation, ridicule and curse. The purpose of using them in a communication is humiliation, abasement, violation of human dignity that cause hostile emotions or treated by a addresser as a doer of unpleasant feelings and states<sup>7</sup>, what has an impact on sense of security if interlocutors.<sup>8</sup>

Political invective, according to the classification is divided into: overt aggression (direct) and non-overt (hidden). Overt verbal aggression consist on expressing explicit negative content towards recipient by using demeaning vocabulary, but also neutral, i.e. generalization ("ty zawsze...", "ty nigdy...") or speaking in a raised voice. Non-overt form of verbal aggression towards recipient can be displayed as a gossip, slander, aspersion or other defaming linguistic actions. It can be expressed in a neutral statements including hurtful and depreciative content, i.e. irony, joke or false compassion. It can also take a form of an implied aggression that cannot be recognized from the content of a message, but concludes of an analysis of context and situation in which the act of a linguistic communication is happening. An attack on other person's image, causing her mental discomfort, is created by using linguistic and morphological measures or emotional syntax. Among frequently used stylistic measures are: irony, sarcasm, mockery and jeer. An audible aggression signal is harsh, directive, raised voice, often passing into scream.<sup>9</sup>

Political invective in a public life is directed into specific person or a group and its aim is to dominate or to make a person or a group disappear from the political scene or at least

Acts of speech that are a display of political

to confine its range of influence. It serves political or ideological purposes, se it's rarely an impulsive reaction, caused by uncontrolled anger. The aggressor is not only up to using disqualifying terms, but also causing hatred; to make the object of aggression being negatively rated by others and to make the addresser is better than recipient; to make an impression that recipient deserves an insult and that addresser negatively assesses recipient in everyone's best interest; also to explain different kinds of repressive actions.<sup>10</sup>

According to I. Kamińska-Szmaj the sources of political invective in political life should be searched in the ideologies that are based on hatred towards others; ideologies created in the times of changes and revolutions, when hatred is focused on those from whom the power was taken; in the strategy taken by politicians, consisting of creating themselves as fighting against evil – political opponent – and in instinctive actions focused on the fight for the leadership (of politicians who treat politics as a war, not a competition).<sup>11</sup>

In a public discourse, particularly in politics, language of aggression is commonly used in a form of invectives. An invective described as a verbal insult (impairment somebody's dignity, affront, violation of norms, rules and values or delinquency against them), affront (offensive word directed to somebody, epithet, invective, demeaning word) or indignity (dishonor, serious insult). An invective is a statement that is: scurrilous, scornful, disdainful, belligerent, sarcastic, ironic, offensive, abusive, defaming, hurtful, disgraceful, slandering, vilifying, irreverent, humiliating, degrading, discreditable, depreciative, discrediting,

<sup>7</sup> I. Kamińska-Szmaj, *Agresja językowa w życiu publicznym. Leksykon inwektyw politycznych 1918-2000*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2007.

<sup>8</sup> J. Piwowarski, *Fenomen bezpieczeństwa. op. cit.*, p. 41-45.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> M. Głowiński, *Mowa agresji*, [w]: *Człowiek i agresja*, Ł. Jurasz-Dudzic (red.), Wydawnictwo Sic!, Warszawa 2002, s. 259-272.

<sup>11</sup> I. Kamińska-Szmaj, *Agresja...*, *op. cit.*

stultifying, mocking, derogating, disparaging, jeering and scoffing.<sup>12</sup>

A specific type of invective is a political invective. It is an intentional verbal act, public and concerning members of political scene, expressing negative emotions of addresser towards a person, group of people or organizations, ideology and/or evaluating somebody (something) negatively using lexical measures functioning in an awareness of certain social community as offensive, that is breaking acknowledged language and cultural rules, or by linguistic measures marked axiologically and/or emotionally, that come to get negative characterization only by verbal and communicative context (political, socio-historical).<sup>13</sup>

There are many linguistic ways to offend political opponent. For this purpose one can use primarily (systemically) evaluative (conventionalized lexical measures vocabulary). Using such words is basic and the easiest, non-requiring high-level linguistic skill, way of affronting, insulting somebody or something. To the most commonly used in political language means belong: names of people of low intellectual and moral level names of dangerous groups or communities, adjectives negatively evaluating character trait, intellectual level, predispositions to hold certain public roles, mocking the looks, physical disability, manner of acting and speaking verbs defining blameworthy actions of the opponent.<sup>14</sup>

The next category of the measures is connotatively evaluative vocabulary. Those are words secondarily evaluative, which meanings are formed under the influence of the moral system, knowledge and beliefs of the certain community in regards of the designation defined under that name. In a political language negative connotations are activated by: putting the words in purposely

chosen contexts putting surnames of the politicians in negatively evaluated row referring to stereotypes and stereotypical traits given to certain names (pejorative overtone is given by the opposition one's own – stranger or referring to ethnics stereotypes), i.e. *żydokomuna*, using the vocabulary from the animal kingdom in reference to humans and their actions, i.e. *robactwo*; using the names of diseases in reference to phenomenon of political scene intercepting words from colloquial Polish and putting words in an intertextual space, i.e. biblical.<sup>15</sup>

Another category is vocabulary derivative from base words of negatively evaluative (systemic and connotatively) meaning. Those are mostly names of representatives of some traits, doers of the activities, names of the activities and names of abstract features.

Among morphological measures commonly used is variety of flecional forms and non-personal form instead of masculine personal form names of politicians are used in plural, diminutive suffixes are added to bases words that are no suitable for such changes in order to make them more contemptible, and of less value, expressive formatives are used to grant them pejorative and/or ironic character, derivatives are being created from the abbreviations of parties or organizations' names, different types of derivatives are being created from the names of people present on the political arena, expressive onomastic derivatives with foreign suffix –izm/-yzm, i.e. *kaczym*, word-formative (ironic and malignant) transformation of politicians' names and surnames, i.e. *Tusku*; expressive compounds and symphysis, i.e. *sojalfaszyści* and contaminations (hybrid of two names) i.e. *seksafera*.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>14</sup> Por. M. Karwat, *O złośliwej dyskredytacji (...)*

<sup>15</sup> M. Głowiński, *Mowa agresji (...)*, *op.cit.*

<sup>16</sup> I. Borkowski, *Wróg numer jeden nie zawsze jest pierwszy. Czyli o pewnej hierarchii inwektyw politycznych* [w:] *Rozprawy Komisji Językowej XXXVII*, red. J. Miodek, W. Wysoczański, p. 21.

Another category concludes phrasal verbs and their modifications. They are being

transformation, expanding (completing) a fixed affiliation, replacing stylistically neutral words with those of negative marking or by creating new connections disseminated in political communication.

Commonly used are also combination (assemblage) of highly negative evaluation (systemic and connotative). Stylistic device called hyperbole is used to express strong feelings and to create the enemy with exaggerated negative features, very dangerous, despicable and blameworthy.<sup>17</sup>

## SUMMARY

Political invective in a public space, including politics, is an ethical and social problem. It is connected to confrontational attitude and favors uniting against "common enemy", preventing agreement for common good. It's one of the causes of the decline of deeper reflection over reality, criticism based on in-depth analysis of the phenomenon, because it doesn't allow doubt and consideration, being based on impulsive emotional reactions and a need of achieving goals. It states for lack of knowledge of other strategies of action, and so – for limitation of people who use it. In a consequence, an aggressive discourse clearly impoverishes and shallows the reception of reality, what influences social life and as a result – life of every citizen.

Political invective, through being wide-spread in a statements of public personas in media, starts to be noticed as a normal linguistic act, more rarely as an inappropriate behavior. More and more social acceptance for verbal aggression is raised what seems to be a dangerous phenomenon that one should try to stop. Particularly big influence it has on young people who learn social behaviors (including

created intentionally, they reveal negative evaluation of the opponent by deliberate

linguistic) by observing and imitating adults, as well as those seen in media. The way of using language to approach one another, to express emotions, to unload emotional tension, to quarrel and expressive negative opinions is based on the way of communicating by public personas, then passing to everyday life and interpersonal communication of everyday people. The way of communication is not only based on attitude and behavior of others but also creates it.

If we agree that effective communication is the very basis of everyday life, then a positive change in behaviors in a communication process can directly ameliorate the effectiveness of the functioning of public institutions and by all means – citizens.

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<sup>17</sup> K. Ożóg, *Polszczyzna przełomu XX i XXI wieku. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Rzeszów 2001, pp. 158-177.

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AUTHORS

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**Radosława Rodasik, M.A.**, graduate of the Faculty of Polish Philology of the Jagiellonian University, at present Ph.D. candidate in Linguistic of the Jagiellonian University.

**Aleksandra Skórzak, B.A.**, graduate of the Faculty of Polish Philology of the Jagiellonian University, M.A. candidate in of the Faculty of Polish Philology of the Jagiellonian University

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