

A typology of insult: a corpus-based study on Italian political debates on Twitter

Margarita Borreguero Zuloaga

Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Based on a corpus of 200 tweets posted by Italian politicians on Twitter from August 2020 till September 2021, this study proposes an analysis of the types and functions of linguistic mechanisms serving the purpose of insulting or denigrating a political adversary. The notion of insult is defined from a multidisciplinary approach mainly considering the contributions of pragmatics (particularly speech act theory and politeness theory), linguistics, and semiotics. Insults are classified in three different types: a) insults addressed to individuals; b) insults addressed to groups (which constitute a minority in a certain community due to the gender, race, sexual orientation, origin, religion, etc. of their members); c) contextual insults, which emerge from a more elaborated linguistic structure (not restricted to lexical elements as in the other two groups) and presuppose some kind of cultural knowledge. The focus of the research will be on this latter type, which is particularly frequent in our corpus. Its discursive function, target-audience, pragmatic effects, and rhetorical construction will be examined in order to explain why it is so frequent in the political interaction on social networks, and precisely on Twitter. Our aim is twofold: a) to contribute to a better characterization of insults as discourse strategies; and b) to enrich the description of the “new” political language linked to the new ways of communicating with the civil society.

References

Bianchi, Claudia (2021): Hate speech. Il lato oscuro del linguaggio, Bari/Roma, Laterza. De Mauro, Tullio (2016), “Le parole per ferire”, *Internazionale.it* (27 settembre 2016), Domaneschi, Filippo (2020): *Insultare gli altri*, Torino, Einaudi. Faloppa, Federico (2020): *#ODIO. Manuale di resistenza alla violenza delle parole*, Torino, UTET. Gallardo Pàuls, Beatriz; Enguix Oliver, Salvador (2016): *Pseudopolítica: el discurso político en las redes sociales*, València, Universitat de València. Mancera, Ana; Pano, Ana (2013): *El discurso político en Twitter* Barcelona, Anthropos.