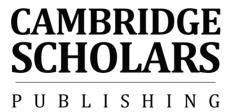
Unconventional Anthroponyms

Unconventional Anthroponyms: Formation Patterns and Discursive Function

Edited by

Oliviu Felecan and Daiana Felecan



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FOREWORD

This book continues a series of collective volumes on onomastics, edited by Oliviu Felecan with Cambridge Scholars Publishing: *Name and Naming: Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives* (2012) and *Onomastics in Contemporary Public Space* (2013, co-edited with Alina Bugheşiu). Through their studies, the editors aimed at covering, from a diachronic and synchronic perspective, a broad range of topics related to proper names and name-giving. In order to ensure, on the one hand, the success of our endeavour and, on the other, a significant multicultural openness, we invited researchers from all over the world to take part in our projects.

Unconventional Anthroponyms: Formation Patterns and Discursive Function closes the homonymous three-year research project conducted by Daiana Felecan. It explores one of the least studied onomastic fields, that is, unconventional names, which give way to numerous controversies as regards their proprial status.

Naming is the main language function that individuals employ in the process of communication. Addressing/foregrounding persons that are directly or indirectly involved in an interlocution is achieved by means of identifying verbal signs: proper names. Based on the parameters that underlie the development of interaction (i.e., the speakers' age and marital status, their socio-professional status, the specific features of interpersonal relationships—distance/familiarity, the degree of formality/semi-formality/informality of the interaction), locutors opt for anthroponyms that satisfy the needs of their communicative intention. Therefore, in contemporary naming practice, one can distinguish two linguistic means of nominal referential identification:

- a "natural" one, which occurs in the process of conventional, official, canonical, standard naming, resulting in *conventional/official/canonical/standard anthroponyms*, and
- a "motivated" one, which occurs in the process of unconventional, unofficial, uncanonical, non-standard naming, resulting in *unconventional/unofficial/uncanonical/non-standard anthroponyms*.

Conventional name-giving corresponds to the "initial baptism," which is construed as an equally spiritual and social event by the individuals that adhere to the customs of the Christian religion, or simply as a social event, by those whose entry in the world is not (also) officiated in a religious

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environment (for various reasons), but only recorded with the local Register Office. The social dating of a person is concomitant with the act of individual naming; thus, while receiving a national identity number (statistic existence), an individual also receives a personal name code (signified existence).

As any other linguistic sign, a name, in general, is not merely a signifying element; it is, at the same time, the conceptual reflex (the signified) of a denotatum. Put differently, by means of a name, an extralinguistic reality is represented linguistically (as a result of designation).

The significance of an official name is arbitrary, conventional, unmotivated, occasional and circumstantial, as it is not likely to carry any intrinsic meaning; it is given by third parties (parents, godparents, other relatives and so on) with the intention to individualise (to guarantee differentiation from other individuals). Any meaning that a name might be endowed with should be credited to the name giver: s/he assigns several potential interpretations to the phonetic form of choice, based on his/her aesthetic and cultural options and other kinds of tastes, manifested at a certain time. The conventional dimension of an anthroponym is completed by its sociocultural dimension: the aim of giving a name is to acknowledge an individual on the level of a community, as a result of the individual's name being remembered and used by the members of the collectivity in question. They conventionally accept and employ a particular name as an individual's *social signum*.

In the case of the former means of name-giving (i.e., conventional naming), anthroponyms are selected from a limited inventory, which is usually specific to a given historical community. Conversely, as regards the latter means of name-giving (i.e., unconventional naming), one can notice the annulment of almost all constraints (except for quantitative restrictions, with respect to some categories of unconventional anthroponyms, such as user names) and the manifestation of speakers' unrestrained creativity.

There are situations when, in verbal interaction, locutors address one another or refer to persons evoked in their speech by using surrogates of real, official names of the given individuals. As regards allocutive discursive contexts (direct address, face-to-face interaction), this is rarely the case; however, it frequently occurs in referring discursive contexts (reported speech, when referring to a denotatum *in absentia*). While a conventional name is a *symbolic sign*, i.e., it stands for the bearer (*aliquid stat pro aliquo*), an unconventional name functions as an *iconic sign*, which is meant to replicate, to simulate a certain kind of behaviour of the name bearer.

Several categories of unconventional anthroponyms can be delineated: *nicknames, bynames, user names, pseudonyms, hypocoristics, individual* and *group appellatives* that undergo anthroponymisation.

They are the products of the process of unofficial name-giving, the nominal "derivatives" that result from a name giver's wish to attach a specifying/defining verbal (i.e., linguistic) tag to a certain individual. An unconventional anthroponym is a person's *singular signum*, which may convey a practical necessity (to avoid anthroponymic homonymy: the existence of several bearers for a particular name) or the intention to qualify a certain human type (to underline specific difference—in this case, the unconventional anthroponym has an over-individualising role—or, on the contrary, to classify, that is, to mark an individual's belonging to a class, his/her association with other individuals with whom s/he is typologically related—see the case of generic unconventional anthroponyms).

The studies included in this volume are grouped into four parts. The aforementioned classes of unconventional anthroponyms are approached either from a structural perspective (with reference to formation mechanisms) or from a functional perspective (as regards contextual values, especially pragmatic ones, which are developed by these name forms in different contexts of communication).

The first part of the book presents various theories regarding unconventional anthroponyms, focusing on their status within onomastics.

The second part, which is the largest in the volume, offers a consistent corpus by means of which authors illustrate and support the viewpoints delineated in the theoretical considerations they put forward. This section contains synchronic and diachronic perspectives on language facts pertaining to diverse cultural spaces: British, Dutch, French, Italian, Hungarian, African (South African, Zimbabwean), Asian (Japanese) and South American (Brazilian).

In the third part of the volume, the unconventional names are analysed with reference to the fictional (literary) world.

As in the case of the preceding volumes on onomastics, the last part brings together, under the title *Miscellanea*, studies that, starting from unconventional anthroponyms, confirm the multi- and interdisciplinary perspective of the texts in the present book.

In conclusion, through the contributions of the 31 linguists from fifteen states on four continents, *Unconventional Anthroponyms: Formation Patterns and Discursive Function* tries to complete the studies that exist in the specialised literature on onomastics by means of new perspectives of investigation into unconventional anthroponymy, one of the compartments

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that has been attracting more and more interest in onomastic researchers in recent years.

Daiana and Oliviu Felecan

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PART ONE:

THEORY OF UNCONVENTIONAL NAMES

VOCATIVES AS MITIGATORS IN FACE-THREATENING CONTEXTS

ANGELIKA BERGIEN

Introduction

The following example from *The Guardian* (May 13, 2013) is an interesting starting point for this chapter. It is part of a promotional campaign by the international non-governmental organisation *Actionaid* against tax dodging. The background of the text is a black and white photograph of British Prime Minister David Cameron.

Dave—it's time to make the big boys pay.

In this example, the name *Dave* occurs in initial position and is used in its vocative function. Vocatives in general are noun phrases that refer to the addressee, but are not syntactically integrated in other structures. They are closely related to forms of address (cf. Wood and Kroger 1991), but they are just one particular type of address form. Biber et al. (1999: 1108–1109) distinguish eight categories of vocatives, including endearments, nicknames, honorifics and first names, which may take initial, medial, final or stand-alone position.

Vocatives have traditionally been described as "attention-getters" (Archer et al. 2012: 217), which are used "to attract the attention of the person being called or summoned" (Lyons 1977: 217). This use is closely related to "the function of singling out the appropriate addressee(s)" (Biber et al. 1999: 1112). In the example above, the initial vocative *Dave* combines the attention-getting with the identifying function, but in this case the attention-getting function clearly dominates, since identification of the addressee is achieved mainly via the huge photo of the Prime Minister.

In recent years, a third function of vocatives has been in the focus of interest. Biber et al. (1999: 1112) call it "maintaining and reinforcing social relationships," and with regard to their study of vocatives in casual conversation, Jaworski and Galasiński (2000: 49) conclude that "the

speaker does not use the vocative to attract the attention of his addressee, but to define the interpersonal space between them." Against this background, vocatives can also be described as politeness strategies, since they may be used as redress mechanisms in face-threatening acts. These observations will be seen as central in the present study.

In the example above, however, there is no straightforward answer as to the social function of the vocative *Dave*. It is interesting to note that the familiarised first name Dave is used rather than the first name in full David. This is no doubt a rather unconventional name use, since the familiarised first name is normally reserved for family members or friends. What is even more striking is the fact that the title *Prime Minister* would have been appropriate in this public environment. Familiarisers mark the relationship between speaker and addressee as a friendly or even familiar one to claim in-group membership with the addressee. Claiming in-group membership is, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), a positive politeness strategy. This is supported by the informal style of the imperative it's time to make the big boys pay. Dressed up in a tone of familiarity, the sentence may be intended to negotiate a decrease in social distance between Actionaid and the Prime Minister, but it may also fit into broader accusations that the Prime Minister is too soft on tax dodging. The violation of an expected conventional form is certainly "strategic" (Jaworski and Galasiński 2000: 38), but outside a particular context there is also vagueness concerning the concrete strategies intended with the vocative. The name *Dave* is perhaps used to intensify a face-threatening imperative, belittle the Prime Minister or simply show irony and humour.

The problems resulting from the analysis of this example show that vocatives in English "are almost never neutral: they express attitude, politeness, formality, status, intimacy, or a role relationship, and most of them mark the speaker," characterising him or her in relation to the addressee, as Zwicky (1974: 796) observes. This chapter is mainly concerned with address shifts and deviations from expected vocative forms in public political discourse. The aim is to show that vocatives in general and first-name vocatives in particular are very sensitive to the discourse context. As Jaworski and Galasiński (2000: 37) point out, "the choice of a marked form signals the desire to challenge the status quo."

Politics and discourse

The word *politics* can refer to a wide range of activities and, as George Orwell (1962: 154) once claimed, "there is no keeping out of politics. All issues are political issues." The idea that even the most everyday decision

can be seen in a political light implies that politics first of all refers to people and the lives they lead in organised communities. This becomes especially prominent when we look at how politics and language are intimately intertwined. There is no doubt that political activity does not exist without the use of language and people will feel that they have communicated successfully when they see that the results of their verbal exchanges, i.e., the course of action they have requested, demanded or defended, have been taken into account. This raises the question of what constitutes politics. According to Chilton and Schäffner (2002: 5), there are two broad strands in today's discussion of the subject:

On the one hand, politics is viewed as a struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it. [...] On the other hand, politics is viewed as cooperation, as the practices and institutions a society has for resolving clashes of interest over money, power, liberty and the like.

In the light of the above, politics can be said to be about conflict and negotiation, which may constitute the topic and/or the extralinguistic background of communication. As Gotti et al. (2002: 12) point out,

the interaction of conflict and negotiation is central in legal, political, economic and academic discourse, where in many cases the starting point is provided by an extra-linguistic conflict which has to be negotiated or overcome, in order to re-build consensus.

The process and result of such a complex activity, which is predominantly constituted in language, can be considered a discourse. In this perspective, language as used in discourse does not merely represent the world; it also affects social relations and structures.

It would go beyond the scope of this chapter to give a detailed and exhaustive account of the linguistic characteristics of political discourse. However, three issues are preliminary to an adequate understanding of the sample discussion in this study: firstly, political discourse is an important way of conducting affairs in the public interest; secondly, political discourse is primarily argumentative; thirdly, political discourse is implicitly dialogic (cf. Bergien 2005).

In democratic societies political discourse may rely heavily on diverging views of the same extralinguistic issues, so that the recipients' consensus may be constructed by highlighting what is presented as "wrong" in the opponents' line of argument (cf. Gotti et al. 2002: 12). Potential or actual conflicts may be related to divergences or even

incompatibilities of concepts, standpoints or ideological values, but also to misinterpretations or expressions of criticism. What is especially important for the present study is that argumentative discourse frequently has a more or less explicit or implicit "protagonist—antagonist" organisation (Fairclough 2003: 82).

There is no denying that political discourse is largely determined by the social role of the participants. The question of whether participants in political discourse have their social identity imposed on them or whether they are able to establish their own identity is of crucial importance for the present study, since it influences the patterns of argumentation considerably. In the approach adopted here, *identity* is seen as a superordinate term uniting the individual and the intersubjective roles which individuals acquire, construct and observe in their social life (Goffman 1959; Riley 2002; Fairclough 2003). Social identity is thus the sum of the numerous subgroups of which the individual may be a member (e.g., age, occupation, religion). Social identity is not something an individual can always determine on his/her own; it is also bound up with how others perceive this person. In addition, as Fairclough (2003: 160) points out:

Achieving social identity in a full sense is a matter of being capable of assuming social roles but personifying them, investing them with one's own personality (or personal identity), enacting them in a distinctive way. [...] Becoming a personality is a matter of being able to formulate one's primary and ultimate concerns, and to balance and prioritise one's social roles in terms of these

The complex nature of participants' identities can be most concretely focused on in the corpus texts chosen for this study: political debates and television interviews. Political debates are adversarial in nature and the opponents aim to gain political or electoral advantage over one another. Political television interviews take place between interviewers and politicians with the purpose of providing detailed information on a particular subject and/or forcing the interviewee to admit something disadvantageous to him/herself or his/her political course.

First-name vocatives as mitigators

In addition to linguistic and world knowledge, discourse participants need a general knowledge of certain communicative norms and principles. One of them is the politeness principle, which maintains social relations. Politeness refers to interpersonal considerations and linguistic choices which affect the way people communicate. It was first formulated by

Lakoff (1973) and basically implies three maxims: *Don't impose, give options* and *make your receiver feel good*. A central concept of politeness is the acknowledgement of the *face* of other people or "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61). As Cameron (1995: 186) points out, "I know what you think, but since I respect you I am signalling the fact that I value your opinion too."

Face is important to individuals in both a positive and negative aspect. One preserves the negative face of a participant by interfering with their actions or values as little as possible; one attends to the positive face of a participant by supporting their presumed self-image as much as possible. "Ordering someone to do something is *prima facie* threatening to that person's negative face; so, where other factors allow it, politeness considerations usually lead us to mitigate and minimize" (Bussmann 1996: 370).

Mitigation is, generally speaking, a strategy for coping with disagreement and conflict, whose main purpose is to reduce vulnerability by reducing the force of an utterance (Caffi 1999; Martinovski 2006). Mitigating strategies include, among others, the use of indirectness, disclaimers, hedges and vocative names. With regard to the mitigating function of vocatives, Axelson (2007) analysed vocatives in a discourse of a multicultural graduate student group at a large American university and found that the main social concern American students address through vocative use was to soften acts of inequality with regard to a less fluent non-native speaker from Japan. McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2003) looked at vocative use in two samples of language in use: casual conversation between family and friends, and radio conversation between presenters and callers. The result of their study shows that 15 per cent of vocatives in casual conversation and 10 per cent of vocatives in radio phone-in programmes function as mitigators.

Vocatives can be symmetrical, in so far as speakers can choose to introduce people as being of the same type or status, as for example in *Tom, this is Alice*; they can also be asymmetrical, i.e., being of a different type, as in *Tom, this is Dr Jones* (cf. Thomas and Waering 1991: 140). In asymmetrical contexts first-name use may have mitigating or face-threatening effects. The following quotations from Crystal and Crystal (2000: 220) illustrate this quite nicely:

One reason I try to get people to call me Newt is to break down barriers. It's a whole lot easier for someone to say, 'Newt, you've got a spot on your tie,' than it is to say 'Congressman.' (Newt Gingrich, attributed, 1979)

The ultimate indignity is to be given a bedpan by a stranger who calls you by your first name. (Maggie Kuhn, August 20, 1978, Observer)

According to Biber et al. (1999: 1110), first-name vocatives are normal in present-day English between not only friends but colleagues and even casual acquaintances, and they "also have an important social role in showing the recognition of individuality among participants in conversation." In contrast to this, the title and surname option is increasingly relegated to mark a more distant and respectful relationship towards an acquaintance. Bargiela et al. (2002: 4) observe that in recent years the naming strategies of English-speaking groups have tended to become more similar and "the general rule in English-speaking cultures is that you move to first name terms as soon as possible." Yet it must be borne in mind that the use of reciprocal first names is relatively recent for British speakers and for many speakers over the age of 50 it is still quite difficult to call someone to whom they have not been introduced by their first name. The standard form of address in political debates or interviews is, however, still the title and surname option to show a more distant and respectful relationship. The following examples illustrate that the asymmetrical shifting to first-name vocatives by one participant marks a change in pragmatic discourse strategies.

It is important to note that vocatives when used as mitigators "are neither syntactically nor semantically necessary and they function solely as pragmatic downtoners of challenges, adversative comments, and disagreements" (McCarthy and O'Keeffe 2001: 173). In the following extracts all vocatives are superfluous to transactional meaning and are not necessary for addressee identification. This makes them an ideal linguistic device for all sorts of pragmatic functions, including self-image building by political actors.

Patterns of mitigation: Sample analyses

In the following extracts, transcription conventions are those of the original texts; emphasis (boldface) is mine.

Political debates

The first extract is from a two-hour long television debate on the future of the monarchy in Britain (broadcast on Independent Television, Channel 3, in January 1997). The extract is taken from Fairclough (2003: 242) and contains a polemical accentuation of the differences between Frederick

Forsyth (journalist and strong supporter of the British monarchy) and Stephen Haseler (Professor of Government and critic of the British monarchy) as members of the panel. The debate is orchestrated by the journalist Roger Cook to set these views against each other. Forsyth and Haseler avoid vocatives during the debate, but there is one exception when it comes to the—at that time—hotly debated question of succession to the British throne and Forsyth gets rather angry. He addresses Haseler in a very expressive formal way using the pronoun *you* + honorific *sir* and later *Mr. Haseler* in connection with a face-threatening statement (*you are not British*). This indicates the opposite of deference, namely condescension, by suggesting that the hearer's worth is less than that of the speaker. Haseler, quite unexpectedly, uses the first name of Forsyth, *Frederick*, to calm him down, to mitigate his own impolite interruption of Forsyth's statement and to get Forsyth's attention for his own face-threatening act (the warning of *Charles the Third*):

Extract 1

ROGER COOK: we're talking about the monarchy

FREDERICK FORSYTH: right or are we talking about a magnificent Queen who has been forty four years a monarch and put no foot wrong . you sir are not British . you are not (unclear) Mr Haseler . (SH: this country) because every family every family with thirty five members in it in this country has got a couple . (SH: th-) that they really would prefer not to have

STEPHEN HASELER: this country is not no no

ROGER COOK: the Queen the Queen can't reign for ever we have to look forward. and that's where that's where the problems lie surely

Frederick Forsyth: no nono let's be realistic the Queen

STEPHEN HASELER: we—we're facing **Frederick** we're facing Charles the Third the real reason

ROGER COOK: hold on hold on

The second extract comes from a transcript of the third and last presidential debate between Senator John McCain and Barack Obama in Hempstead, NY, in 2008 (*The New York Times* 2008). Bob Schieffer of CBS News is the host. Obama and McCain avoid vocatives or use title (*Senator*) + surname address. Obama, however, shifts from this address form when Schieffer asks both Obama and McCain why their campaigns

had turned very nasty in terms of mutual slander. McCain answers first, accusing Obama of spending more money on negative ads than any political campaign in history. He uses title + last name (*Senator Obama*) or the impersonal third-person form in non-vocative function. Obama violates this pattern in the following extract from that debate and shifts to first-name vocative to mitigate his accusation and to signal in-group membership. At the same time, this usage is self-image building in that it indicates the relative power or status of Obama. The fact that McCain never uses Obama's first name seems to support the idea that Obama's first-name use is considered a face-threatening act by the much older McCain.

Extract 2

OBAMA: Well, look, you know, I think that we expect presidential campaigns to be tough. [...] Two-thirds of the American people think that Senator McCain is running a negative campaign versus one-third of mine. And 100 percent, **John**, of your ads—100 percent of them have been negative.

McCain: It's not true.

OBAMA: It absolutely is true. [...] The notion, though, that because we're not doing town hall meetings that justifies some of the ads that have been going up, not from your own campaign directly, **John**, but 527s and other organizations that make some pretty tough accusation, well, I don't mind being attacked for the next three weeks.

Media interviews

The following extracts come from *The Andrew Marr Show*, an hourlong British television programme broadcast on BBC One on Sunday mornings. It is presented by Andrew Marr, previously the BBC's Political Editor, or Jeremy Vine, who interview political figures involved in the current events of the week. Vocatives are not frequent in these rather formal interviews and with a few exceptions the host introduces his guests using title + first name + surname (e.g., *Shadow Business Secretary Chuka Umunna*).

In the third extract (BBC One 2013c), Umunna uses the first name of the host, *Jeremy*, when he challenges Jeremy Vine's statements about his (Umunna's) political programme, whereas Vine avoids vocative forms throughout the interview.

Extract 3

JEREMY VINE: What have you announced? You've announced you're taking the winter fuel allowance away from the richest pensioners. That's about it.

CHUKA UMUNNA: Well, look, you've got the short-term and you've got the long-term. You've got the short-term debate about how we get the public sector balance sheet back into a more healthy state. But actually I don't think, **Jeremy**, that we do great service to the country if we reduce down economic debate purely to what you tax on your spend [...]

In another part of the interview, Umunna acknowledges Vine's critical position and admits difficulties in the management of a certain issue:

CHUKA UMUNNA: [...] But of course we can all do more and part of the challenge with this issue, **Jeremy**, is that it's a little bit like running up a down escalator—you're always seeking to go ahead—and that's quite difficult.

The next extract (4) comes from an interview with Shadow Education Secretary Tristram Hunt (BBC One 2013a). The presenter is Andrew Marr. Like Umunna, Hunt uses the first name of the presenter asymmetrically in adversative contexts. Note that the second vocative states an identity claim (*Andrew, you are a historian and you know...*) intended as a politeness strategy to enhance the presenter's positive face by emphasising his expertise.

Extract 4

TRISTRAM HUNT: Well, our policy was set up by my predecessor, Stephen Twigg, who did huge amounts when he was a school minister in the last Labour government, for improving standards in London's schools and Stephen said in June that our policy was to keep the good free schools when we're in power, not to set up new free schools along the Michael Gove model, but to have parent academics and that's where we have the innovation, the social enterprise, the creativity. Andrew, the labour way... wait hold on... (interjection)

ANDREW MARR: This sounds like a huge change in tone at the very least, from the Labour Party.

TRISTRAM HUNT: Andrew, you are a historian and you know that the history of the Labour movement is about mutualism, co-operatives, the nonconformist tradition, civil society, all of that energy... (interjects)

In his interview with presenter Jeremy Vine (BBC One 2013d), Shadow Justice Secretary Sadiq Khan uses Vine's first name to soften the assumption that Vine had not read a particular speech properly.

Extract 5

JEREMY VINE: He came out and praised him.

SADIQ KHAN: Well if you read the speech, Jeremy, that's not what he said at

all.

JEREMY VINE: He did.

Towards the end of the interview Vine asks Khan about a particular campaign aimed at illegal immigration. Khan's use of the first-name vocative is very expressive in the answer to that question and is probably used to save his own face.

JEREMY VINE: I want to ask you about a different matter before you go, which is this ad campaign on the side of the bus which is in... I think going round six boroughs. Says 'Go home or face arrest.' It's aimed at illegal immigrants.

SADIQ KHAN: Well it's not Jeremy, it's not aimed at illegal immigrants.

The final extract (6) shows another asymmetrical first-name use in connection with a face threat. Ann Clwyd, MP, corrects the presenter by stating that the problem under discussion is not a new problem (as has been suggested by the presenter) (BBC One 2013b).

Extract 6

ANDREW MARR: Those are very powerful points and a lot of people will be thinking of course what happened to you utterly, utterly awful. But it was perhaps because you are an MP and able to raise it in the House of Commons in the way you did that we are now talking about it, so what do you think can be done to start to change the atmosphere in hospitals and in the profession?

ANN CLWYD: Well this isn't a new thing, **Andrew**. I was for three years on the Royal Commission on the National Health Service, the only royal commission we've had. It reported in 1979. [...]

Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have tried to capture the dynamic character of vocatives in face-threatening contexts and, in doing so, have suggested that the mitigating power of first-name vocatives is especially strong when they are used asymmetrically in political debates or interviews. In these contexts they define the interpersonal space between participants, save the addressee's face and contribute to an attempt of positive self-image building by the political actors. Given the limitations of the data, the findings can only be read as indications of trends in behaviour. Future research on vocatives should give explicit attention to concrete situations and specific uses of mitigating vocatives as indicators of gender differentiation.

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