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# IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES IN PARLIAMENTARY DISCOURSE: A COGNITIVE-PRAGMATIC AND SOCIOCULTURAL APPROACH

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**ABSTRACT**
This article focuses on the use of impoliteness strategies in the discourse of American, Bulgarian, Polish, and Ukrainian parliaments. Our research of impolite rhetoric, also known as unparliamentary language, is located on the intersection of cognitive pragmatics, cultural linguistics, and discourse analysis. We use an integrative framework, in which the pragmatics of impoliteness is underpinned by the cognitive model of the concept of IMPOLITENESS. We offer a description of impoliteness strategies in parliamentary discourse, single out the leading strategy of devaluation of the opponent, and define the stereotypical for each parliament verbal means of the strategy of devaluation and its tactics: criticism and belittlement of one’s merits and importance. Their verbal markers are lexicalized and syntactic units bearing the meaning of negative characterization, disrespect, mockery, sarcasm. We hypothesize that the variation of impoliteness strategies is different parliamentary discourses corresponds to linguistic, pragmatic, and sociocultural dissimilarities, and provide support for this through an empirical study. Linguistically, discursive means of devaluation in the American, Bulgarian, Polish, and Ukrainian parliaments are context free and context dependent, and their ratio varies. In all these parliamentary discourses, the lexicalized markers of impoliteness come from common mental source domains: NEGATIVE EVALUATION, LEGAL OFFENCE, DEMOCRACY, DECEPTION, HOSTILITIES, their variation is due to corresponding construals of the world. Culturally, we claim that the form and content of impoliteness strategies is indirectly connected with a low-context culture in the USA as opposed to a high-context type of Slavic cultures. In the former, devaluation of opponents is mostly reached by lexicalized markers with inherent negative meaning; and in the latter, by syntactic context-dependent means. Pragmatically, the specific properties of impoliteness strategies in the four parliamentary discourses reveal their relation to the dominant politeness principles, which are negatively oriented in modern English and positively in Bulgarian, Polish, and Ukrainian.

**Key words**: impoliteness strategy, cognitive-pragmatic analysis, cultural linguistics, parliamentary discourse, American, Bulgarian, Polish, Ukrainian.

**І. Шевченко, Д. Александрова, В. Гуторов. Неввічливість в парламентському дискурсі: когнітивно-прагматичний та соціокультурний підхід.** Ця стаття присвячена використанню стратегій неввічливості в дискурсі парламентів США, Болгарії, Польщі та України. Наше дослідження неввічливої риторики, також відомої як непарламентська мова, знаходиться на перетині когнітивної прагматики, культурної лінгвістики і аналізу дискурсу. Ми використовуємо інтегративну методику, в якій прагматика неввічливості базується на когнітивній моделі концепту IMPOLITENESS.


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Ми описуємо стратегії неввічливості в парламентському дискурсі, виділяємо провідну стратегію девальвації опонента і визначаємо стереотипні для кожного парламенту вербальні засоби стратегії девальвації та її тактик: критики і применшення достоїнств і значущості. Їх вербальні маркери – це лексікалізовані та синтаксичні одиниці, що мають значення негативної характеризації, неповаги, глузування, сарказму. Ми припускаємо, що варіювання стратегій неввічливості пов'язане із комплексом мовних, прагматичних і соціокультурних відмінностей окремих парламентських дискурсів і підтверджуємо цю гіпотезу за допомогою емпіричного дослідження. З лінгвістичної точки зору, в парламентах Америки, Болгарії, Польщі та України функціонують контекстно вільні і залежні дискурсивні засоби девальвації, а їх співвідношення варіюється. У всіх парламентських дискурсах лексікалізовані маркери неввічливості сходять до спільних ментальних доменів-джерел: НЕГАТИВНА ОЦІНКА, ПРАВОПОРУШЕННЯ, ДЕМОКРАТІЯ, ОБМАН, ВІЙСЬКОВІ ДІЇ; які варіюються у відповідних картинах світу. У культурному відношенні форма і зміст стратегій неввічливості побічно пов'язані з нізкоконтекстною культурою США, на відміну від слов'янських культур висококонтекстного типу. У першому випадку критика опонентів в основному досягається за рахунок лексікалізованих маркерів з інгерентно властивим девалюативним значенням; а в останньому – контекстно залежними синтаксичними засобами. З прагматичної точки зору, специфічні властивості стратегій неввічливості в чотирьох парламентських дискурсах виявляють їх зв'язок з домінуючими дискурсивними принципами ввічливості, тобто принципами дистанціювання в сучасній англійській мові та принципами зближення в болгарській, польській та українській мовах.

**Ключові слова**: стратегія неввічливості, когнітивно-прагматичний аналіз, культурна лінгвістика, парламентський дискурс, американський, болгарський, польський, український**.**

**И. Шевченко, Д. Александрова, В. Гуторов. Невежливость в парламентском дискурсе: когнитивно-прагматический и социокультурный подход.** Эта статья посвящена использованию стратегий невежливости в дискурсе парламентов США, Болгарии, Польши и Украины. Данное исследование невежливой риторики, также известной как непарламентский язык, находится на пересечении когнитивной прагматики, культурной лингвистики и анализа дискурса. Мы используем интегративную методику, в которой прагматика невежливость базируется на когнитивной модели концепта IMPOLITENESS. Мы описываем стратегии невежливости в парламентском дискурсе, выделяем ведущую стратегию девальвации оппонента и для каждого парламента определяем стереотипные вербальные средства стратегии девальвации и ее тактики: критика и умаление достоинств и значимости. Их вербальные маркеры – это лексикализованные и синтаксические единицы, несущие значение отрицательной характеристики, неуважения, насмешки, сарказма. Наша гипотеза о том, что варьирование стратегий невежливости связано с комплексом языковых, прагматических и социокультурных различий парламентских дискурсов подтверждается посредством эмпирического исследования. С лингвистической точки зрения, в парламентах Америки, Болгарии, Польши и Украины функционируют контекстно свободные и контекстно зависимые дискурсивные средства девальвации, а их соотношение варьируется. Во всех парламентских дискурсах лексикализованные маркеры невежливости восходят к общим ментальным доменам-источникам: ОТРИЦАТЕЛЬНАЯ ОЦЕНКА, ПРАВОНАРУШЕНИЯ, ДЕМОКРАТИЯ, ОБМАН, ВОЕННЫЕ ДЕЙСТВИЯ, которые варьируются в соответствующих картинах мира. В культурном отношении форма и содержание стратегий невежливости косвенно связаны с низкоконтекстной культурой США, в отличие от славянских культур высококонтекстного типа. В первом случае критика оппонентов в основном достигается за счет лексикализованных маркеров с ингерентно присущим им девалюативным значением; а в последнем – синтаксическими средствами, зависящими от контекста. С прагматической точки зрения, специфические свойства стратегий невежливости в четырех парламентских дискурсах обнаруживают их связь с доминирующими дискурсивными принципами вежливости, то есть принципами дистанцирования в современном английском языке и принципами сближения в болгарском, польском и украинском языках.

**Ключевые слова**: стратегия невежливости, когнитивно-прагматический анализ, культурная лингвистика, парламентский дискурс, американский, болгарский, польский, украинский.

## 1. Introduction

The paper examines impoliteness strategies in parliamentary discourse on the examples of proceedings of the parliaments of the USA, Bulgaria, Poland, and Ukraine.

Impolite parliamentary behavior, also referred to as 'unparliamentary language' (Graham, 2016), or 'parliamentary insults' (Ilie, 2001), has been studied in many languages throughout the world. Ilie (2015, p. 11) defines it as

> *Instances of institutionally ritualized face-threatening acts in a highly competitive institutional setting. These acts cover a continuum that ranges from milder or mitigated acts such as reproaches, accusations, and criticisms to very strong ones, for instance insults.*

This investigation is stipulated by Mills (2004; 2009; 2017) who maintains that im/politeness tends to be culture and ideology dependent and based on stereotypes. By paying attention to the cognitive-pragmatic underpinnings of impoliteness in political discourse (Shevchenko, Goncharova, & Gutorov, 2020) and related issues of cultural and social linguistics, we intend to investigate how they correlate in English and Slavic parliamentary discourses, which vary both in their languages and in cultural and social backgrounds.

Parliamentary discourse belongs to political discourse (its hyperonym) and comprises interaction of different genres such as party meetings, committee hearings, etc. (its hyponyms). The object of our research is impoliteness strategies in proceedings and debates of the House of Representatives of the USA, of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, and plenary meetings of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. In this study, following Graham (2016), we will use the term 'parliamentary discourse', which is the most common in research literature and possesses the widest scope of meanings.

Building on (im)politeness theories (Culpeper, n.d.; Locher & Bousfield, 2008) we will proceed from a cognitive-pragmatic understanding of the concept of IMPOLITENESS (Shevchenko & Petrenko, 2019) as a basis for defining impoliteness strategies and tactics.

Paying attention to the fact that pragmatics of parliamentary discourse is culturally and ideologically specific, we claim that impoliteness principle is genre specific and differs in English and Slavic parliamentary discourses as a result of both different linguistic traditions and cultural trends.

As for the latter, at a micro level, there are differences in cultural and social groups and individuals (Mills, 2009). At a macro level, this difference is related both to the dominant type of culture of a particular nation at a certain historical period and to positively or negatively oriented politeness principles prevailing in its ethos**.** This makes it necessary to apply the ideas of cultural linguistics (Sharifian, 2017) to the study of impoliteness strategies. Our theoretical framework combines cognitive-pragmatic and cultural linguistic perspectives of their study.

In this paper, we will try to explore the impoliteness strategies in Germanic and Slavic parliamentary discourse being aware of many vexing social and cultural questions that arise. The review of selected previous research on linguistic impoliteness and the tentative results of our study yield theoretically motivated hypotheses regarding the relationship between linguistic impoliteness and the notion of culture-in-society.

To test this hypothesis, we will start with a brief consideration of cognitive-pragmatic and cultural linguistic methodology used to study impoliteness strategies in parliamentary discourse and describe the illustrative material (section 2). Following that is a presentation and tentative explanation of our data in English, Bulgarian, Polish, and Ukrainian with a special attention to the relationship of discursive strategies of impoliteness and related social and cultural aspects of unparliamentary language (section 3). Finally, we will conclude with some reflections on the key findings about this relationship and perspectives for further analysis (section 4).

## 2. Method and material

This section aims to explicate the theoretical foundations and propose an integrative cognitive-pragmatic and sociocultural framework of analysis of impoliteness in parliamentary discourse. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1988) politeness principle and theories of linguistic impoliteness (Culpeper, 1996; n.d.) this paper uses a cognitive-pragmatic view of impoliteness strategies and combines it with cultural linguistics (Sharifian, 2017) and discourse analysis (Dijk, 2008) into an integrative framework.

Parliamentary discourse is characterized as an institutional subtype of political discourse, "an open, confrontational dialogue among elected members of the citizenry" (Ilie, 2015, p. 1), which complies with specific institutional constraints and procedural regulations and is determined by a high degree of ritualization (Alexandrova, 2017; Chilton, 2004; Chilton & Schäffner, 2002; Ilie, 2001; 2004; Martynyuk & Meleshchenko, 2019; Palonen, 2014). As the main aim of politicians is the struggle for power (Bondarenko, 2020), their communicative behavior is both rational and emotional and occasionally they sacrifice rules of politeness for the sake of brighter argumentation.

> *A major incentive for the parliamentarians' active participation in the debates is their constant need to promote their own image in a competitive and performance-oriented institutional interaction. The MPs' interventions are meant to call into question the opponents' ethos—that is, their political credibility and moral profile—while enhancing the speaker's own ethos, in an attempt to strike a balance between logos (logical reasoning) and pathos (emotion-eliciting force).* (Ilie, 2015, p. 3)

Accordingly, the rules and the degree of im/politeness in parliamentary rhetoric differ from everyday speech which allows us to pay special attention to the content and forms of realization of the principle of impoliteness in parliamentary discourse.

The object of our research — impoliteness — has long been in the focus of various sciences. In linguistic pragmatics, impoliteness is underpinned by Goffman's ideas of face (Sifianou & Blitvich, 2019; Terkourafi, 2015), still until now the notion of impoliteness is highly contested and "related to judgements about norms which are constantly negotiated and change over time" (Sifianou, 2019, p. 49). Impoliteness is defined as a kind of intentional face-attack (Bousfield, 2008; Culpeper, 2010; 2011). It is a face-threatening act or a face-aggravating strategy based on the breach of ethic norms, or negative behavior which causes social conflict (Locher & Bousfield, 2008). From a psycholinguistic point of view, the latter makes impoliteness a form of emotional argument (Keinpointner, 2008). As Culpeper (n.d.) argues,

> *Impoliteness is a negative attitude towards specific behaviors occurring in specific contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires and /or beliefs about social organization, including, in particular, how one person's or group's identities are mediated by others in interaction. Situated behaviors are viewed negatively when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and /or how one thinks they ought to be. Such behaviors always have or are presumed to have emotional consequences for at least one participant, that is, they cause or are presumed to cause offence.*

In discourse, intentional impolite behavior objectifies in strategies and tactics. In discourse analysis, they have cognitive underpinning. Frolova (2017, p. 157) defines discursive strategy as

> *Communicative intention of the speaker, formed on the basis of the use of collective experience for their own individual needs and desires, and linguistic objectification of this intention, giving it an interactive status, taking into account the comprehension of the verbalized intention by all subjects of interaction.*

In a cognitive perspective, impolite behavior, i. e., expressions and their stereotypical contexts, are stored as frames in one's mind (Terkourafi, 2001). Sociocognitive methodology (Kecskés, 2014) takes into consideration pre-existing knowledge of moral norms that both speakers and hearers must have to infer and categorize the intended meaning. This knowledge is stored in the national construals of the world, which have much in common in Christian mentality.

The concept of IMPOLITENESS accumulates the knowledge of stereotyped practices of communicative behavior (Shevchenko & Petrenko, 2019). Theorists of cognitive pragmatics (Schmid, 2012; Shevchenko & Gutorov, 2019) claim that the way of access to this knowledge is through semantic properties of the words which name them. For the concept of IMPOLITENESS they are: *impoliteness, abusiveness, arrogance, assault, belittlement, boldness, coarseness, contemptuousness, crudeness, discourtesy, dishonor, disrespect, harassment, ill-breading, immodesty, immorality, impudence, incivility, indelicacy, insult, obnoxiousness, offensiveness, pushiness, rudeness, shamelessness, tactlessness, vulgarity*, etc. (Dictionary by Merriam-Webster, n.d., TheFreeDictionary by Farlex, 2021; Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online, n.d.; Macmillan dictionary, n.d.). In the English language, they form a semantic field of Impoliteness (fig. 1), which consists of 6 microfields with semantic extensions: Devaluation of the hearer, Unwarranted imposition, Unwarranted intrusion, Unwarranted exclusion, Intended impropriety, and Mock. Within the field of Impoliteness (fig. 1), these microfields are united by corresponding hypersemes and partially overlap (Petrenko, 2018, p. 107).

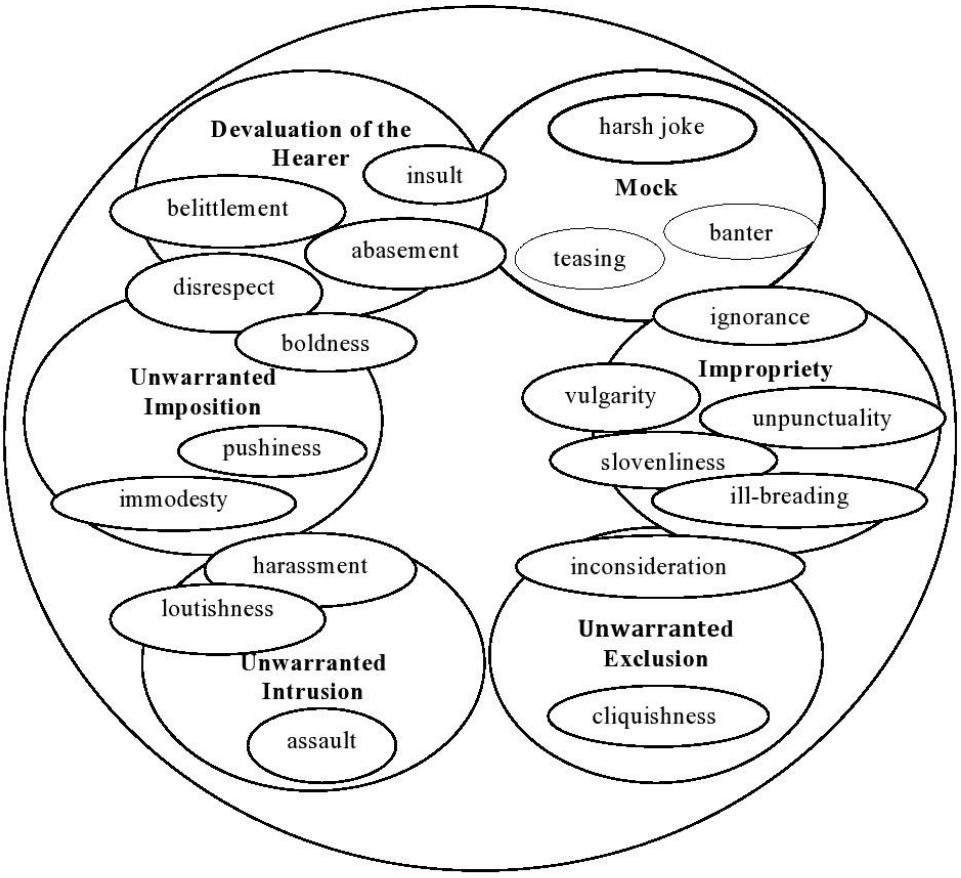


Fig. 1. Semantic field of the names of IMPOLITENESS (Petrenko, 2018, p. 107)

Semantic properties of lexemes in fig.1 comprise relevant criteria for the concept of IMPOLITENESS. Using the methodology of semantics of linguistic nets (Zhabotynskaya, 2013) Petrenko (2018, p. 23) claims, that the conceptual space of IMPOLITENESS is made of six slots linked up with the central notion by causation / characterization (slots DEVALUATION OF THE HEARER, UNWARRANTED INTRUSION, UNWARRANTED EXCLUSION OF THE HEARER, UNWARRANTED IMPOSITION, INTENDED IMPROPRIETY) and by likeness (slot MOCK IMPOLITENESS).

The slots of IMPOLITENESS form a cognitive substrate for impolite behavior: each slot bears mental schemes of a discursive strategy, while the slot's semantic extensions correspond to more specific discursive tactics (Petrenko, 2018). In discourse of fiction, there are strategies of devaluation of the hearer, unwarranted intrusion, unwarranted exclusion, unwarranted imposition, impropriety, and mock impoliteness (Shevchenko & Petrenko, 2019).

In a social perspective, (im)politeness is a kind of social practice, contextual by nature (Mugford, 2018). As a social action, it depends upon the knowledge of social values, common beliefs, and shared discursive routines. Impoliteness is a manifestation of social identity, namely, a breach of social norms (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). Thus it an essential part of cultural models, conventions, and norms that bring about different expectations of polite or impolite behavior in a given language.

In search of a cultural basis for impoliteness strategies in parliamentary discourse of different countries, this paper turns to the theoretical framework of Cultural Linguistic, which integrates the study of language, cognition, and culture. Cultural Linguistics explicates pragmatic meanings as embedded in cultural conceptualizations (Sharifian, 2017, p. 37). Since cultural issues of parliamentary discourse are connected with social and ideological ones, we will stick to a broad sociological understanding of culture as consisting of the values, beliefs, systems of language, communication, and practices that people share in common and that can be used to define them as a collective (Cole, 2020). Also, culture is what we do and how we behave and perform (ibid.) including the narrower concept of ethos, i.e., guiding norms, ideals, and beliefs.

The present study is based on the material of some 2,000 examples of unparliamentary language along with lexical and contextual markers of impoliteness from 2011-2021 parliamentary transcripts of the USA, Bulgaria, Poland, and Ukraine. The study is located on the intersection of cognitive pragmatics, cultural linguistics, and discourse analysis.

### 3. Impoliteness strategies in parliamentary discourse: data and discussion

Parliamentary discourse belongs to a wider sphere of political discourse whose primary purpose is the struggle for power. Hence depending on the context parliamentarians' rhetoric varies from argumentative to confrontational. At the same time, Ilie (2015) maintains that MPs are well aware of the rules imposed on their behavior by their institutional roles and restrict their ongoing confrontations from being overtly rude:

> *Parliamentarians are seen to constantly use their rhetorical skills, in an attempt to find the best ways to verbalize their opinions, beliefs, and convictions. While engaging in ritualized debates, parliamentarians use and take advantage of institutional practices in order to score points by exploiting each other's weaknesses and vulnerabilities. They are committed to the struggle over language as a concrete manifestation of the struggle for power: to acquire political power, to challenge political power, to compete for political power, or to defend and consolidate political power.* (Ilie, 2015, p. 2)

Respectively, in parliamentary discourse of the USA, Bulgaria, Poland, and Ukraine, we have found a limited set of impoliteness strategies mainly those of devaluation of the hearer, unwarranted intrusion, unwarranted exclusion, and unwarranted imposition. In discursive pragmatics, the analysis of impoliteness is grounded in discourse components, among which one of the basic is

genre (Sifianou & Blitvich, 2019). The official situations typical for the genre of parliamentary proceedings are practically devoid of impoliteness strategies of intended impropriety and mock impoliteness.

Being highly ritualized, parliamentary proceedings are guided by conventions. In parliamentary discourse, the origin of im/politeness is not in/directness but conventionalization. As Terkourafi (2015) puts sit, conventionalization is inherently evaluative: through socialization in a community or group people learn the right way of doing something. "That is, the polite evaluation is part and parcel of conventionalization" (Terkourafi, 2015, p. 16). Thus, the knowledge of ethic norms of a certain national culture at a definite historical period is crucial for rendering its parliamentary discourse as polite. At the same time, it questions the notion of im/politeness from the point of view of genre and makes it possible for us to suggest a genre-specific 'axiological scale' for impoliteness rhetoric (as a tentative direction of further research): a certain statement may be acceptably polite in some situations and unacceptably impolite in others.

In parliamentary discourse of the latest decade, devaluation prevails by far all other impoliteness strategies (90% on the average) and equals 93% – 92% – 91% – 85% (in the USA, Bulgaria, Poland, and Ukraine consequently). This is a bald on record strategy; it aims at impinging the hearer's positive face, and it is realized by the two main tactics: criticism and overt belittlement of the opponent's merits or importance.

To reach devaluative effect, the speaker uses the tactics of criticism, i. e., negative characterization or disapproval of the opponent or their activities. Criticism is implemented by lexemes (both context free and context dependent) and speech acts (syntactically).

The impoliteness tactics of belittlement of the authorities or political opponent's merits is realized by speech acts—expessives. In parliamentary discourse, these are sentences, marked by at least one of the following parameters: derogative lexical units, idiomatic expressions, exclamatory structures, question structures. The latter, rhetorical questions, play an important role in the organization of turn-taking, in session structuring, and adding an emotional and expressive edge to parliamentary proceedings of the USA, Bulgaria, Poland, and Ukraine.

### 3.1. Impoliteness strategies in the USA parliamentary discourse

In the proceedings of the House of Representatives, criticism is marked by nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs with inherent negative semantics. These lexemes mostly name concepts, which belong to a set of domains in American construal of the world: DECEPTION, NEGATIVE EVALUATION, DEMOCRACY, HOSTILITIES, LEGAL OFFENCE, etc., the latter prevails both in the number and diversity of corresponding lexemes and in their frequency in discourse.

The markers—nouns used by parliamentarians to devaluate their opponents are connected with:

- LEGAL OFFENCE (crimes and illegal actions): *criminals, fraud, abuse, assault, schemes, scammers, rigging;*
- DEMOCRACY: *usurpation, an unconstitutional takeover (of citizens' right to free speech and association);*
- DECEPTION: *misinformation, hypocrisy, lie;*
- HOSTILITIES: *insurrection, war.*

(1) *Mrs. WAGNER. It (H.R. 1) will grant the Federal Government unprecedented power over voting processes and pave the way for rampant fraud, abuse, and litigation. (CR, 2021, p. H1020)*

The verbs in parliamentary proceedings criticize opponents for their activities:

- LEGAL OFFENCE (committing crimes): *steal, stolen, stifle (economic growth);*

- DEMOCRACY (infringing on democracy): *suppress (legal votes), block (the will of the people), violate, usurp, eliminate (voter ID), destroy (women's rights), erode (trust in the system).*

(2) *Mr. CLYDE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my strong opposition to H. R. 1 because it violates the U.S. Constitution. It usurps the rights of States to establish and administer their own elections.* (CR, 2021, p. H1022)

The adjectives and adverbs negatively characterize opponents by their properties mostly corresponding to four domains:

- NEGATIVE EVALUATION (generalized negative qualities): *wrong, ill-considered, baseless, brutally, cynical, unforgivable, shameful, reckless and dangerous, infamous, flimsy bureaucratic;*
- LEGAL OFFENCE (criminal properties): *illegally (pad their campaigns with taxpayer money), corruptly, deceptively, tragic (fraud), criminal (fraud), dark (money), fraudulent, deceptive;*
- DEMOCRACY (violation of people's rights): *unconstitutional (usurpation of authority belonging exclusively to state legislatures), extremist, flimsy bureaucratic (structures);*
- DECEPTION: *fake (news), deceptive.*

(3) *Ms. JACKSON LEE. Of course, this did not deter the reckless 45th President who then went on to threaten and coerce state election officials to corruptly change vote counts and after that ploy failed, incited his loyalists to storm the U.S. Capitol and use force and violence if necessary to prevent the Congress from conducting the constitutionally required Joint Meeting to count the electoral votes cast and announce the winner of the presidential election.* (CR, 2021, p. H1031)

In parliamentary discourse, the tactics of belittlement of the opponent's merits and importance is realized through disrespect (sarcastic expressions), insults (invectives), and mockery/sarcasm. The latter is mostly shaped as idioms (4), while disrespect takes the form of rhetorical questions (5), for example,

(4) *Mr. CARTWRIGHT. H.R. 1, the For the People Act, is to restore democracy to this country, to restore pure democracy so that we know who is paying for these elections. The dark money interests are squealing about it. They are squealing like stuck pigs. Let's pass H. R. 1.* (CR, 2021, p. H1021)

(5) *Representative JOE SOSNOWSKI. Does anyone doubt that the blunt instrument of donor disclosure in H.R. 1/S. 1 would put millions of Americans' peace and livelihoods at risk of significant, material harm?* (CR, 2021, p. H1035)

Neither of these impoliteness tactics of opponent's belittlement are frequent in the House of Representatives, and invectives (mostly metaphors—*The Washington Swamp*) are very rare. The limited use of insults reveals the difference of parliamentary impolite rhetoric from colloquial impolite speech.

**3.2. Impoliteness strategies in Bulgarian parliamentary discourse**

The lexical markers of devaluation in Bulgarian discourse proceedings are neither numerous, nor frequent. In our examples, markers of all notional parts of speech are able to supply negative characteristics of authorities or political opponents and their activities (6), which are mainly rooted in four domains in the national construal of the world:

- NEGATIVE EVALUATION (generalized negative qualities): *неразбираемо, абсолютно противоречащи, двоен аршин, прекалено много политика и доста ограничена делова дейност, са лишени от каквото и да било основание, голям хаос [incomprehensible, absolutely contradictory, double standard, too much politics, very limited business activity, unfounded for any reason, great chaos];*
- LEGAL OFFENCE (criminal properties): *криминален престъпник, незаконни (превози), извършва нарушение, инкриминиране, наказателна отговорност [a criminal, illegal (shipment), commit a violation, incrimination, criminal liability];*
- DEMOCRACY (violation of people's rights): *лобистки (закон), законът е прибързан [lobbying (law), the law is in a hurry];*
- DECEPTION: *парадокс [paradox]*.

For example,

(6) *ГЕОРГИ СВИЛЕНСКИ. За пореден път – вероятно предпоследния ден на парламента, отново гледаме един чисто лобистки закон.* (NA, 2021)
*[GEORGY SVILENSKY. Once again—probably the penultimate day of parliament, we are again looking at a purely lobbying law].*

In Bulgarian parliamentary discourse, unlike other national proceedings under analysis, impoliteness strategies are mostly marked syntactically. Organized as a sequence of speech acts—from two to five rhetorical questions—such tactics of belittlement are emotionally loaded and realize the impoliteness strategy of devaluation through criticism and / or sarcasm, for example,

(7) *ХАЛИЛ ЛЕТИФОВ. Кога има време да се уточнят тези договори? Кои ще имат право да сключват тези договори? Ако днес ние приемем тази разпоредба, готови ли са и болниците, и съответните фирми да отговорят на тези изисквания? Създаваме ли една предпоставка, за да създадем един голям хаос, защото искаме днес да угодим в дванадесет без пет на някого? Защо толкова важна разпоредба не се подлага на общо обсъждане, за да се намери подходът, а разделяме една дейност, за да създадем условия за едни и пречки за други?* (NA, 2021)
*[KHALIL LETIFOV. When is it time to clarify these contracts? Who will have the right to conclude these contracts? If we adopt this provision today, are both the hospitals and the companies concerned ready to meet these requirements? Are we creating a precondition to create a great chaos because we want to please someone today at twelve without five? Why is such an important provision not subject to general discussion in order to find the approach, but we divide one activity in order to create conditions for some and obstacles for others?]*.

On the whole, the rhetoric of Bulgarian MPs is distinguished by discreet and business-like language, the predominance of rational argumentation over emotional, and the absence of invectives.

### 3.3. Impoliteness strategies in Polish parliamentary discourse

In the discourse of Polish parliamentarians, the impoliteness strategy of devaluation is mostly found in the tactics of criticism. A Polish set of mental source-domains for criticizing their opponents mainly contains NEGATIVE EVALUATION, LEGAL OFFENCE, DEMOCRACY, DECEPTION, where notions from the former currently prevail:

- NEGATIVE EVALUATION (generalized negative qualities): *bez należytych konsultacji, dyskusji, błędy legislacyjne, brakować jakichkolwiek konkretów, brakować rozstrzygnięć, istotne wątpliwości, których bazą warsztatową są sny jako źródło faktów, mieć jakiś kawałek tortu do podziału, na pewno dochodzi do naukowej patologii, narzędzie propagandowe, niczego nie robić*

*dla nauki, nie określić konsekwencji, nie mieć okazji, niedopracowany, niestaranny, trudno o bardziej nieprecyzyjny zapis,ulubione zwierzęcie PiS-u, czyli dojna krowa, w tempie, które jest nie do przyjęcia, w ostatniej chwili, z niezrozumiałych względów, zrobić źle [without proper consultation, discussion, legislative errors, there is no specificity, lack decisions, significant doubts, whose workshop base is dreams as a source of facts, have a piece of the pie to share, there is certainly a scientific pathology, propaganda tool, do nothing for science, do not specify the consequences, do not have the opportunity, underdeveloped, sloppy, hard to find a more imprecise wording, PiS's favorite animal, that is, a cash cow, at an unacceptable pace, at the last minute, for incomprehensible reasons, do wrong];*

- LEGAL OFFENCE (criminal properties): *może nie dochodzić do przestępstw, publikacjach szkalujących Polaków, zmniejszać środki Banku Gospodarstwa Krajowego [may be no crimes, publications defamating Poles, reduce the resources of Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego;*
- DEMOCRACY *(violation of people's rights): nie słuchać się w ogóle strony społecznej [the social side is often not listened to at all];*
- DECEPTION: *robić sztuczki, fałszywy, kreatywna księgowość [do tricks, false, creative accounting*—"the process of using unusual but not illegal ways to change business accounts to make them look better than they really are" (Dictionary by Merriam-Websters, n. d.)].

The discourse of the polish Sejm is rich in sarcasm (8). These are speech acts with expressive illocutionary force provided by the satirical incongruence between the notions of a favourite animal *cow* (mental domain PETS) and avarice *cash cow* (mental domain MONEY):

(8) *POSEŁ KRYSTIAN JARUBAS. Otóż jego rola sprowadzona jest tak naprawdę do roli ulubionego zwierzęcia PiS-u, czyli dojnej krowy.* (SJ, 2019, p. 7)
*[KRYSTIAN JARUBAS, MP. Well, his role is actually reduced to that of PiS's favorite animal, that is, a cash cow]*.

Rhetorical questions are widely used in the Polish parliamentary discourse, though their sequences (9) are shorter than in Bulgarian and usually consist of no more than two questions:

(9) *POSEŁ SZYMON ZIÓŁKOWSKI. Stawiam pytanie: Po co tworzyć instytucję wirtualną, skoro mamy instytucje realne? Dlaczego tworzymy ją w roku wyborczym?* (SJ, 2019, p. 11)
*[SZYMON ZIÓŁKOWSKI, MP. I ask the question: Why create a virtual institution, if we have real institutions? Why are we creating it in an election year]*.

Idioms based on metaphors (10a, 10b) create emotional tension and also serve as tactics of belittlement of the opponent in the discourse of the Polish Sejm:

(10a) *POSEŁ KRYSTIAN JARUBAS. Ta myśl niestety nasuwa się sama, jeśli popatrzymy na to, jak przez ostatnie 3 lata PiS i przystawki brały w jasyr wszystkie instytucje, które mogły obsadzić słynnymi już Pisiewiczami czy Misiewiczami.* (SJ, 2019, p. 7)
*[KRYSTIAN JARUBAS, MP. This thought, unfortunately, comes to mind when we look at how PiS and the additions have enslaved of all institutions that could be staffed by the already famous Pisiewiczes or Misiewiczami over the last three years.]*

(10b) *POSEŁ JÓZEF BRYNKUS. Na marginesie dodam, na podstawie tej legislacji, ale też innych legislacji w tym obszarze, że jest to dowód ewidentny na Polskę resortową, w której każdy minister chce mieć jakiś kawałek tortu do podziału, by poczuć się ważnym.* (SJ, 2019, p. 7)
*[JÓZEF BRYNKUS, MP. By the way, I would like to add, based on this legislation, but also other legislation in this area, that this is evident evidence of a ministerial Poland, in which each minister wants to have a piece of the pie to share in order to feel important]*.

### 3.4. Impoliteness strategies in Ukrainian parliamentary discourse

In the plenary meetings of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, devaluation strategy is realized both by the tactics of criticism and the tactics of belittlement, in which disrespect as well as mockery appears in various sarcastic expressions.

Parliamentarian's rhetoric of direct criticism in Ukrainian is mainly based on a limited set of domains: NEGATIVE EVALUATION, DECEPTION, LEGAL OFFENCE, DEMOCRACY, and HOSTILITIES/OFFENDER. The latter domain comprises information that was recently stored in Ukrainian construal of the world and connected with the current Ukrainian crisis and hostilities resulting from the 2014 annexation of the Crimea by the Russian Federation and the war in the East of Ukraine. The domain OFFENDER accumulates semantically neutral notions of Russia (nation, state, power—*Russian, Putin*, etc.) which have lately received a strong derogative meaning.

The tactics of criticism is realized by lexical units bearing the corresponding semantics, mostly adjectives and adverbs.

Negative characterization and disapproval of the opponent is found in determiners, which name the following domains in the Ukrainian construal of the world:

- NEGATIVE EVALUATION: *негативний (приклад, реакція), неправильний і неприпустимий, безсоромно, антисоціальна (політика), пагубна, неефективний [negative (example, reaction), wrong and unacceptable, shameless, antisocial (politics), pernicious, ineffective];*
- LEGAL OFFENCE (crimes and illegal actions): *незаконні [illegal];*
- DEMOCRACY: *нереформований, так званий незалежний, неконституційні (рішення) [unreformed, so-called independent, unconstitutional (decisions)];*
- HOSTILITIES/OFFENDER: *російський (найманець) [Russian (soldier of fortune)]*.

For example,

(11) *КОЛТУНОВИЧ О.С. … економіка України впевнено рухається до свого краху. У нас хибний економічний курс, відсутня економічна програма, антисоціальна політика, пагубна тарифна політика. Два Кабінети Міністрів Зеленського виявилися неефективними. Влада накоплює безсоромно борги. <…> Президент вводить санкції, запроваджує незаконні, неконституційні кроки по відношенню до інформаційних телеканалів…* (VR, 2021)
*[KOLTUNOVYCH O.S. … Ukraine's economy is confidently moving towards its collapse. We have a wrong economic course, no economic program, anti-social policy, disastrous tariff policy. Zelensky's two cabinets proved ineffective. Authorities shamelessly accumulate debts. <…> President imposes sanctions, introduces illegal, unconstitutional steps against information TV channels…]*.

Occasionally, nouns and verbs also serve as markers of devaluation of the opponent, though they are not frequent:

- LEGAL OFFENCE (verbs): *учинити розправу, красти [commit massacre, steal];*
- DECEPTION: *імітація, профанація, фікція, брехня, недомовленість [imitation, profanation, fiction, lies, understatement]*.

In contrast to American, in the modern discourse of Ukrainian Rada the impoliteness strategy of devaluation is embodied syntactically, i.e. through frequent (46%) non-conventional sarcastic phrases, which contextually bear disrespect or mockery (12) and through rhetorical questions (13):

(12) *ШУФРИЧ Н.І. Дякую, шановний головуючий. Чи назріло питання справедливого правосуддя в Україні? Безумовно. Назріло і перезріло, ізвіняюсь, уже й згнило.* (VR, 2021)
*[SHUFRICH N.I. Thank you, dear chairman. Is the issue of fair justice in Ukraine overdue? Certainly. It's ripe and overripe, I'm sorry, it's already rotten].*

(13) *ФЕДИНА С.Р. У ваших документах пише, що Революція Гідності – це масові заворушення з застосуванням сили. Так де ваша гідність? Чому ви суперечите в своїй документації постановам і рішенням Верховної Ради України? І коли нарешті за злочини проти Майдану ви будете притягати тих, хто вбивав і розстрілював майданівців? (VR, 2021)*
*[FEDYNA S.R. It is written in your documents that the Revolution of Dignity is a mass riot with the use of force. So where is your dignity? Why do you contradict the resolutions and decisions of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in your documentation? And when at last for crimes against the Maidan you will involve those who killed and shot Maidan residents?*].

Ukrainian parliamentary discourse gives examples of the violation of the principle of impoliteness reciprocity. As Culpeper and Tancucci (2021) claim, the Principle of (Im)politeness Reciprocity concerns the (mis)matching of (im)politeness across participants in interaction; as a fundamental mechanism in shaping (im)politeness in interaction, reciprocity is driven by morality and interacts with context, especially power.

In example (14) below, the mismatch of the impolite question and the polite answer results from the high position of the person who gives the answer. The report of O. Sukhachov, the current Head of the State Bureau of Investigation, is followed by an MP's question containing the impoliteness strategy of devaluation, namely belittlement in the form of an invective *(лайно [shit])*:

(14) *ЛЕРОС Г. Б. Олексію Олександровичу, по-перше, цей звіт – повне лайно. По-друге, у мене до вас запитання: коли ви почнете допитувати депутатів-корупціонерів з правлячої партії? <…>*
*СУХАЧОВ О. О. Дякую за запитання. Їх чотири. Тому я прошу звернутися за вказаними кримінальними провадженнями на моє ім'я з особистими запитами, і ми будемо їх відпрацьовувати та надавати відповіді відповідно до Кримінального процесуального кодексу. Дякую.* (VR, 2021)
*[LEROS H. B. Oleksiy Oleksandrovych, first of all, this report is complete shit. Secondly, I have a question for you: when will you start interrogating corrupt deputies from the ruling party? <…>*
*SUKHACHOV O. O. Thanks for the question. There are four of them. Therefore, I ask you to apply for these criminal proceedings in my name with personal requests, and we will work them out and provide answers in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Code. Thanks].*

Insults in the form of zoomorphic Goossensian metaphtonymies (15) are not excluded from Ukrainian parliamentary discourse. For example,

(15) *ЗАБРОДСЬКИЙ М.В. Історія, яка залишає більше питань, ніж відповідей. Не зрозуміле блеяння керівництва про фейки і непричетність, спроби ігнорування і замовчуваності, розгубленість і незадоволеність в суспільстві. (VR, 2021)*
*[ZABRODSKY M.V. A story that leaves more questions than answers. Leaders' bleating about fakes and non-involvement, attempts to ignore and remain silent, confusion and dissatisfaction in society is not clear].*

In example (15), the cognitive metaphtonymy *leaders' bleating* results from cross-mapping of conceptual properties of PEOPLE and SHEEP to yield a new meaning in the generic space of a metaphor 'LEADERS ARE SHEEP' and then, as a result of cognitive metonymic use of *sheep* as a symbol of *feeble-mindedness*, this metaphtonymy ascribes to leaders the derogative stereotypical meaning 'LEADERS ARE FEEBLE-MINDED'.

### 3.5. Impolite practices in parliamentary discourse: further explanation

Parliamentary discourse in Europe and the USA is regulated by rules and norms, mostly established by tradition. Namely, certain words, phrases, or forms of communicative behavior are considered inappropriate for use in session. For example, as Pilkington (1999) points out, in the British House of Commons any insinuation of MP's dishonesty (direct accusation of lying, etc.) is utterly unacceptable. Being universal by nature, these rules and traditions to some extent vary from parliament to parliament. In this section, we will suggest a further sociocultural explanation of the use of impoliteness strategy of devaluation in the parliaments of the USA, Bulgaria, Poland, and Ukraine.

On the one hand, impoliteness strategies of devaluation in the discourse of the four parliaments are united by the topics of discussion and by lexicalized markers of impoliteness which come from common source domains NEGATIVE EVALUATION, LEGAL OFFENCE, DEMOCRACY, DECEPTION, HOSTILITIES. The difference of the political situation of each country explains the variation of individual slots of these domains both in their number of lexical units and in their frequency in discourse (see table 1).

*Table 1*

**Source domains for impoliteness strategies in parliamentary discourse**

| Domains—sources for devaluation strategy | Parliamentary discourses | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | American | Bulgarian | Polish | Ukrainian |
| NEGATIVE EVALUATION | 30 | 49 | 38 | 41 |
| LEGAL OFFENCE | 42 | 35 | 30 | 17 |
| DEMOCRACY | 14 | 8 | 15 | 12 |
| DECEPTION | 9 | 5 | 10 | 14 |
| HOSTILITIES | 1 | - | 3 | 11 |
| OTHER | 4 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

On the one hand, the balance of context-free and context-dependent (lexical and syntactic) verbal means of impoliteness in different parliaments vary: in American as opposed to Bulgarian, Polish, and Ukrainian parliamentary discourse the numerical ratio of lexical units and sentences is 80:20 and 35:65 respectively. We are inclined to ascribe this variation to the combined effect of multiple causes – social difference in the types of cultures, linguistic, and pragmatic dissimilarities. At the same time, we are far from interpreting politeness strategies as directly dependent on social and cultural issues.

In Hall's parlance, culture plays the role of individuals' and groups' identification in society.

> *Culture has always dictated where to draw the line separating one thing from another. These lines are arbitrary, but once learned and internalized they are treated as real.* (Hall, 1976, p. 230).

There are ‘high- and low-context cultures’ (Hall, 1976). In a high-context culture, some of the information remains implicit, since it is grounded in common knowledge shared by groups of people and understood from culture itself. In a low-context culture, the information should be explicit, since it is not widely shared by people or consecrated by tradition. Accordingly, in high-context cultures, the choice of the right word that satisfies tradition is of high importance, while in low-context cultures, the importance of a single word is reduced.

As Copeland and Griggs (1986) proved, American culture belongs to a low-context type, while all Slavic cultures (Bulgarian, Polish, Russian, etc.) are of a high-context type; and our results do not contradict their conclusion.

In the USA parliamentary discourse, the dominant means of the impoliteness strategy of devaluation are lexicalized markers. They have inherent semantics of impoliteness and need no context to make the devaluative meaning. The USA parliament enjoys a long history of democratic tradition. No wonder that professional groups of parliamentarians know and maintain the tradition, which many of them acquired through education at the same top schools and colleges, previous political career, etc. As we have shown above, context dependent syntactical means of impoliteness are not typical for the parliamentary rhetoric of the House of Representatives.

As for the parliamentary discourses of Bulgaria, Poland, and Ukraine, their impoliteness strategies are marked mostly by context dependent sentences (in Bulgarian and Polish) or both lexically and semantically (in Ukrainian). As Ilie (2015, p. 6) puts it,

> *In the case of several Central and Eastern European countries, although they experienced a relatively similar political system during the communist era, they nevertheless display significant differences; these are due to their distinctive, historically rooted political cultures, which are still reflected in specific parliamentary practices <…>. Both parliaments shared the experience of communist censorship, which did not allow actual debates but only well-rehearsed speeches followed by applause on command.*

At the beginning of the 21st century, these low-context cultures undergo similar processes of social and cultural transition. As comparably ‘young’ democracies they work out their own rules and traditions of communication in politics or restore the national parliamentarian traditions of their historic past.

From pragmalinguistic point of view, we can tentatively suggest that different tendencies in the use of impoliteness strategies can be ascribed to different national ethic systems and, respectively, dominant politeness principles, which change historically. Modern North American and Slavic discourses are dominated by opposite politeness principles. Underpinned by the historic development of national ethos, in modern English discourse, negative linguistic politeness prevails (Kopytko, 1993, p. 107), while Bulgarian, Polish, and Ukrainian discourses are dominated by positive politeness.

## 4. Concluding remarks

In this article, we have analyzed the discourse of American, Bulgarian, Polish, and Ukrainian parliaments of the latest decade and aimed to describe its impoliteness strategies. To reach this aim we have suggested an integrative framework of analysis theoretically underpinned by cognitive-pragmatic, sociocultural, and discourse analysis paradigms of linguistic research.

The study has proved that devaluation of the political opponent and authorities is the leading impoliteness strategy, and its tactics are: criticism (negative characterization and disapproval) and belittlement of one’s merits and importance (disrespect, mockery, sarcasm, and even insults in some national discourses). In each national parliamentary discourse, there are specific stereotypical verbal means of devaluation, mainly different in lexical and syntactic markers of impoliteness and their ratio.

We claim that the variation of impoliteness strategies in different parliamentary discourses corresponds to their linguistic, pragmatic dissimilarities, and is influenced by the social difference in the types of cultures. At the same time, there is no direct correspondence between impoliteness principle and sociocultural issues.

From the linguistic point of view, in the discourse of the American, Bulgarian, Polish, and Ukrainian parliaments, verbal means of devaluation strategy are lexical and syntactical, i.e. context independent and dependent, and the ratio of these means in parliamentary proceedings varies. The lexicalized markers of impoliteness come from common source domains in the national construals of the world: NEGATIVE EVALUATION, LEGAL OFFENCE, DEMOCRACY, DECEPTION, HOSTILITIES. The difference of the political situation of each country explains the variation of the set of lexical units and their frequency in discourse.

From the point of view of culture, we claim that the type of culture is relevant though not decisive for the content and form of impoliteness strategies: a low-context culture in the USA and a high-context type of Slavic cultures. In the USA parliamentary discourse, the dominant means of opponents' devaluation are lexicalized markers with inherent negative meaning; while in Bulgarian, Polish, and Ukrainian discourses syntactic means, in particular, rhetorical questions with context dependent meaning, prevail.

From the pragmatic point of view, the specific properties of impoliteness strategies in the parliamentary discourses analyzed in this paper reveal their relation to the dominant politeness principles based on national ethic systems: negative linguistic politeness dominates in modern English and positive in Bulgarian, Polish, and Ukrainian.

We hope this exploration of discursive impoliteness strategies used by parliamentarians will help to reveal their ideological commitments and argumentation tactics in parliament. The broader implications of this study for further research lie in the areas of cross-cultural pragmatics and sociolinguistics and concern the need to widen the focus of cognitive-pragmatic studies of political discourse to include its broader genre repertoire.

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**ABBREVIATIONS AND SOURCES FOR ILLUSTRATIONS**

CR – Congressional record. (2021). *Proceedings and debates of the 117th Congress, first session, 167*(40).

NA – National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria. (2021). *Chetiristotin shestdeset i vtoro zasedanie. Sofia, chetvartak, 4 mart 2021 g. Otkrito v 9,05 ch.* [462th meeting. Sofia, Thursday, March 4, 2021. Opened at 09:05 am]. Retrieved April 30, 2021, from https://www.parliament.bg/en/plenaryst/ns/55/ID/10550.

SJ – prawozdanie Stenograficzne z 78. posiedzenia Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w dniu 13 marca 2019 r. [Transcript of the 78th meeting of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland from March 13, 2019]. (2021). Warszawa.

VR – Verkovna Rada of Ukraine. (2021). Zasidannia 10 [Meeting 10]. Retrieved April 30, 2021, from https://www.rada.gov.ua/meeting/stenogr/show/7640.html.

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