



We kindly invite you to fuck off: Linguistic (im)politeness and Polish Women's Strike.

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The October 2020 ruling of the Julia Przyłębska Constitutional Court proclaiming a near-total abortion ban provoked a series of street protests attended by hundreds of thousands of demonstrators. While such reaction might have been predicted given the opinion polls on the matter, the ruling had the unintended consequence of an outburst of linguistic creativity among the protesters.

Written on cardboards or shared as memes on social media, the slogans went beyond the usual expressions of dissent. Expletives entered the public sphere on an unprecedented scale, with the main message of the movement being *wypierdalać* (fuck off) and crowds chanting *Jebać PiS* (fuck the governing party) accompanied by cheerful tunes. While some criticised the expletive-laden language as primitive and unbecoming of public debate, many of the banners were highly intertextual work that referenced popular and classical culture, media, philosophy, cuisine, fairy tales and more. Furthermore, the calls for more polite forms of protest were answered with banners that, in extremely courteous language, invited the government to bugger off.

This paper analyses the impoliteness strategies (Culpeper 1996) and humour (Dynel 2008, 2017) employed by the protesters in their various forms of expression. We have gathered a multimodal corpus of over 200 photos from the protests, including banners, cardboard signs and murals expressing outrage over the ruling. We use the Face Threatening Act theory (Brown and Levinson 1987) and an approach to multimodal analysis proposed by Forceville (1996) to look at the text, image and context of each photo and create a Polish database of acts of civic impoliteness.

References:

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