

## **Im/politeness and in/civility: A neglected relationship?**

**Maria Sifianou** - National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Recent approaches to im/politeness have emphasised the importance of lay understandings of politeness and suggested that they should not be ignored in politeness research. Such lay views can be found in online newspaper articles dealing with issues of im/politeness and the comments they receive. These are worth exploring even though they may reflect stereotypical and ideological knowledge (Mills, 2009). The data for this presentation come from such an article entitled “Greek impoliteness: 10 things that kill you in this city” and the subsequent comments. The article appeared in the free press online newspaper LIFO.

Research on computer-mediated communication has noted the rampant impoliteness in such contexts which is mostly attributed to the anonymity and the ensuing deindividuation afforded by online platforms (see, e.g., Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2014; Santana, 2014). Impoliteness has been found to proliferate especially when contentious topics are involved. Im/politeness can be such a topic because people disagree as to what it is and how it is manifested. Yet, one would assume that concern with issues of im/politeness and willingness to get engaged in such interactions would be expressed in a polite way.

However, the brief analysis of my data indicates that, despite the topic, some posters use impolite language. In addition, it appears that the understandings of impoliteness presented are not restricted to impoliteness as such, but reflect the rather broader concept of incivility, a term that can be used to refer to im/politeness at a societal level (Lakoff, 2005). It is also worth noting that in the cases of such online data, politeness scholars talk of impoliteness whereas scholars in fields such as journalism, sociology and political science talk of incivility. Interestingly, it is political scientists who have attempted to distinguish between the two (e.g., Papacharissi, 2004). Thus, the aim of this presentation is to try and explore the relationship between im/politeness and in/civility.