

‘You look like an evil witch’: A contrastive investigation of gendered- based aggression against female politicians

Violence against Women in Politics has emerged as an interdisciplinary field of research of global relevance (Esposito and Zollo 2021). The present paper aims to contribute to it by adopting a linguistically-anchored, doubly contrastive angle to the study of gendered-based online aggression. Borrowing our conceptual tools from language aggression and impoliteness research (Bou-Franch 2014; Bou-Franch and Garces-Conejos Blitvitch 2014; Culpeper 2011), Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS) (KhosraviNik and Esposito 2018) and feminist pragmatics, we map out how Spanish-speaking and Greek-speaking Twitter users target two female politicians positioned at opposite ends of the political spectrum: the Spanish left-wing MP, Irene Montero and the Greek right-wing MP, Niki Kerameus. The analysis explores how social media users draw upon locally and globally-oriented resources in order to attack their targets, looking at the role of historicity in the manifestation of gendered aggression. The results suggest that, despite the opposing social values and ideological positionings reflected in the tweets examined, misogynistic abuse anchored in sexist representations of women emerges as a salient shared strategy in both Spanish-speaking and Greek-speaking datasets.

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Primary authors: Dr VLADIMIROU, Dimitra (Coventry University); Dr FERNÁNDEZ AMAYA, Lucía (Pablo de Olavide University)

Presenter: Dr VLADIMIROU, Dimitra (Coventry University)