

# Markers of agonality in the discourse

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**Abstract.** The article is devoted to one of the topical problems of linguistics - verbal agonality. Verbal agonality is an integral part of interpersonal communication and expresses rivalry, aiming to achieve victory by any communicative means, including psychological and/or verbal aggression. Verbal violence is common in many communicative situations and in different social groups, it can occur between people of equal or different status; it is expressed by speech acts of different stylistics. One of the ways of speech interaction, namely, the interactive way is considered discourse, since from the point of view of the communicative-pragmatic aspect, many modern linguistic concepts treat discourse as an interdisciplinary category. The semantic integrity of discourse consists of semantically structural components, one of them can be agonality. The communicative dialectic allows through agonality to express aggression, insult and other feelings as a result of communication, as well as feelings that have not received their completion, that is, they express neither agreement nor disagreement.

## 1 Introduction

Agonality consists in struggle, competition, rivalry, aiming to achieve victory. The purpose of agonal discourse is to establish intellectual, psychological, moral superiority, dominance in interpersonal relations, victory in elections, in a game show or in a court hearing, entailing material or status gain.

The concept of agonality originated in Hellenic culture. The whole system of values of Ancient Greece was oriented on approval or disapproval, and agonality expressed the aspiration of ancient Greeks to perfection and personal superiority in all spheres of life.

The word agon itself denoted in ancient Greek the realm of contests and duels. It referred to both physical competitions (Olympic Games) and mental ones (theatre, poetry, music, etc.).

## 2 Research methodology

The concept "agonal" was formed by the famous Swiss scientist and philosopher of culture Jakob Burckhardt in 1860 to denote one of the most characteristic features of Greek culture - its competitive nature.

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This problematic was dealt with by leading Russian and foreign linguists, such as I.V. Arnold, N.D. Arutyunova, T.A. Van Dyck, V.I. Karasik, M.M. Karasik, Karasik, M.M. Makovsky, M.I. Otkupshchikova, L.N. Sinelnikova, E.I. Sheigal, A.V. Yarovoy, Edward Titchener, F. James, James B. Stiff, Kerbrat-Orreccioni, C. Mehrabian, A., Young, A. L., & Sato, S. Auchlin/Ferrari, and others.

Different researchers view agonality from different angles, emphasising one or another aspect of the phenomenon.

Thus, F. Hietzsche speaks of agonal education, the purpose of which is the good of the state society [1].

J.-F. Lyotard considers linguistic acts as a manifestation of agonistic life [2].

N.K. Kalashnikova notes that agon refers to the universal qualities of culture, the need to make another space one's own [3].

At the present stage, the concept of "agonality" can be attributed to aggression and rivalry, as people have become more pragmatic, more indifferent to other people's problems, less sentimental.

Today, three main types of agonality are distinguished:

1) Confrontational agonality - verbal equivalent of struggle-war.

This includes various kinds of conflicts - domestic, industrial, political with a rigid verbal vocabulary and appropriate intonation. There is a struggle for supremacy and elimination of the rival, establishing their superiority. This type of agonality is especially widely used in politics in the form of dialogue, which seems to take place in a normal format, but in fact it takes place in the form of verbal aggression.

In conflict agonality rivals use all possible ways of aggression - from warnings to direct threats.

2. Discussion agonality - a dispute, discussion, debate, allows to establish the truth, reveal different points of view and come to a single opinion. Presidential and parliamentary TV debates are genres of political discourse where this type of agonality is present a priori.

3. game agonality - a game-competition. These can be any intellectual games.

The term "discourse" was first introduced by the Belgian scientist E. Bussans in his work "Language and Discourse", which was published in 1943 in Brussels [4].

Despite the many studies on this problem, many issues remain not fully explored: for example, discourse and text; discourse and speech.

In his work "Strategies for understanding a coherent text", T. Vandyke first distinguished between discourse and text, and later researchers of this problem began to distinguish discourse and speech [5]. Vandyke first distinguished the concepts of discourse and text, and later researchers of this problem began to distinguish discourse and speech [5].

Among many concepts treating discourse as an interdisciplinary category, there is one in which discourse is considered as an interactive way of speech interaction, from the point of view of the communicative-pragmatic aspect.

V.I. Karasik believes that "the concept of "discourse" has become broader than the concept of "language"" [6]. [6].

B. M. Gasparov refers discourse to the most important moment of human activity. B. M. Gasparov considers the circumstances of discourse emergence to be:

- 1) communicative intentions of the speaker;
- 2) the interlocutors' relations;
- 3) the context of discourse;
- 4) peculiarities of the epoch;
- 5) communicative situation;
- 6) associations with past communicative experience [7].

The semantic integrity of discourse consists of semantically structural components. "For the speaker, global meaning is a holistic amount of information generated by him in the course of the communicative process, intended to be transmitted to the listener" [8].

The categorical features of discourse, highlighted by the French-Swiss linguist and cultural critic P. Serio, allow us to consider this linguistic phenomenon as "language in live communication" and the connection with "the person speaking" [9].

P. Serio's works are the basis for further research in the field of discourse in European and Russian scientific schools.

### 3 Results and Discussions

Psychological violence is generally used to gain or maintain control over someone. The interlocutor or partner is not respected and his or her consent is obtained in an unacceptable manner. All the strategies using psychological violence have in common the fact that one person behaves towards the other in a dominant position, placing him or herself intrinsically above them:

- constantly criticising them
- putting them down ;
- distorting reality in order to change their perception of it;
- making them doubt themselves
- manipulating the person's emotions ;
- isolating them socially;
- etc.

This form of aggression is often difficult for victims and others to detect because it is subtle and hypocritical. Victims may feel that they are being manipulated (that someone is playing a trick on them) or that they are being treated unfairly. However, there are certain signs or markers in the abuser's verbal behaviour that can be used to identify psychological abuse. These include

criticism and doubt:

- You never get it right the first time! "You never get it right the first time!
- You're not feminine enough! "You're not feminine enough! "

blackmail:

- "Je sais des choses sur toi que les patrons seraient bien déçus d'apprendre. " / "I know things about you that the superiors would be very disappointed to find out".

false or unfounded accusations (without evidence):

- "Je savais que tu ne méritais pas ma confiance. " / - "I knew you didn't deserve my trust".

threats:

- "Si tu parles de ça au patron, tu vas me retrouver sur ta route. " / "If you tell your boss about it, I will find you." [10].

Repeated criticism or frequent rebuke, silence is also used:

- the person takes offence, does not speak for hours, even days;
- the person deliberately avoids a topic to create tension;
- the person pretends not to hear the other person.

Psychological violence is common in many situations and in different social groups, and can occur between people of equal or different status. It is often present in situations of domestic violence, can occur between an elderly parent and their adult child, and in the context of harassment, e.g. between two employees of the same level, etc.

One type of psychological violence is verbal aggression. Verbal abuse is one type of aggression. As a type of emotional abuse, verbal aggression must be eradicated because it violates the personal dignity of the victim.

Verbal abuse is defined as aggression to undermine a person's dignity and safety through insults or humiliation. It can take various forms, i.e., it can be insulting, humiliating, intimidating, malicious irony, etc.

Thus, the dignity and self-esteem of the abused person suffers from the abuser believing that they have the 'power' or 'privilege' to attack another person and behave in this way. Such aggression can occur in a variety of contexts, e.g. with a partner, among friends, at work, in the service sector, on public transport, etc.

"Speech aggression is a purposeful communicative action oriented to cause a negative emotional-psychological state (fear, etc.) in the object of speech influence" [11].

Verbal aggression may include markers such as:

Aggressive outbursts (insults and humiliation):

-Non, dit mon voisin, enfin si...je comprends bien à quel point ça du être dur, ç'est vrai. / -No," says my neighbour, "well, yes..... I understand how hard it was, it's true.

Accusations:-

- "Je suis sûre que tu me trompes! " / - "I'm sure you're cheating on me!"

Humiliating or harsh judgements and criticisms, devaluing the victim:

- "Bah, ça n'a rien à voir avec votre problème". - "Well, it has nothing to do with your problem."- "It's your fault that I'm getting angry, you're unbearable!"

- "C'est de ta faute si je me fâche, t'es pas endurable!"

Contempt:

- "Je savais que tu ne méritais pas ma confiance. " - "I knew you didn't deserve my trust."

Orders, excessive demands, shouting, threats:

- "Réfléchis bien avant de faire quoi que ce soit, parce que tu ne reverras pas tes enfants." - Think carefully before you do anything, because you won't see your children again."

Degrading or insulting nicknames:

Cretin, idiot, salop! Scoundrel, idiot, bastard! [10]

Sometimes a person may lose their temper and say something they didn't mean to.

However, it is necessary to reflect and ask for forgiveness, recognising the harm done to the other person.

Verbal abuse is the repeated and deliberate practice of humiliating and belittling another person whom the offender perceives as inferior.

Verbal abuse is used to intimidate, humiliate or control a person or group of people. It can also be found in all forms of interaction (between strangers, neighbours, colleagues, friends, spouses), in power relationships (boss - employee, teacher - student, coach - athlete).

Like psychological abuse, verbal abuse can be difficult to recognise because many people treat it as a form of violence.

recognise it because many people trivialise it and ignore it, while those around them think it is none of their business. Here are some signs / markers by which you can identify verbal abuse:

сapказм:

- eh où je me mets madame / - Where do I go, madame?

insults:

- "T'es un vrai boulet pour l'équipe! "You're just a burden on the team!"

- "Comment t'arrives à rester en vie en étant aussi con?" / - "How do you manage to stay alive being such an arsehole?"

derogatory remarks:

- "On n'a n'a jamais vu plus incompetent que toi, le patron devrait te renvoyer!" / - "We've never seen anyone more incompetent than you, the boss should sack you!"

shouts and orders:

- "Arrête de dire des conneries si tu ne veux pas te faire traiter de conne!"/ - "Stop talking rubbish if you don't want to be called an arsehole!" [10].

Very often school students are subjected to aggression, either from the teacher or from classmates (bullying).

For example:

Very often students are subjected to aggression either from the teacher or from classmates. The following example shows aggression on the part of the teacher towards students and specifically towards girls. The teacher, without finishing his phrases and thoughts, deliberately creates a situation where the pupils do not understand what the teacher is talking about and what the teacher requires of them. This made them terrified. The greatest pleasure for this teacher was to assign exercises that could not be found.

Pascale - C'était un type qui dictait un cours. Il marchait de long en large dans la salle, et il s'arrêtait au milieu d'une phrase et disait: "Un tel, continuez. ' Et le 'un tel,' c'était toujours les filles, ma copine et moi. Alors que nous, on "ramait" et on était terrorisées. On ne savait pas de quoi il s'agissait, on ne comprenait rien ... on n'a plus rien compris toute l'année. On essayait de s'en tirer, d'apprendre pour les colles. C'était affreux, mais vraiment épouvantable! (...) Son grand plaisir, c'était de fourguer des exercices qu'on ne pouvait pas trouver et, en colle, ce n'était que cela, des exercices avec des astuces.

/ This guy was dictating a lecture. He would walk back and forth across the room, stop in the middle of a sentence and say, "So-and-so, go on." And the "so-and-so's" were always the girls, me and my friend. While we were "working hard" we were also being terrorised. We didn't know what it was, we didn't understand anything.... we didn't understand anything all year. We were trying to cope, to prepare for exams. It was horrible, really horrible! (...) His great pleasure was to sell us exercises that we couldn't find, and that was all it was - trick exercises.

The teacher's verbal aggression led not only to psychological trauma, but affected even the physical condition of the students.

N. - Comment as-tu vécu cette année? / How did you spend this year?

P. -J'ai été malade, j'ai eu une colite toute l'année. A la fin, mes parents sont venus me chercher, affolés..... Je veux dire qu'il y a même eu des symptômes physiques. On arrivait à deux heures de l'après-midi, après le repas. On attendait, on le guettait: il va arriver.... il va arriver... la porte s'ouvrait: il rentrait. Tu vois, c'était du théâtre: "Interrogation écrite. "Prenez une feuille. "Sur le repas! On ne digérait pas, nous. Ce n'est pas étonnant que j'aie eu une colite! .... Je marchais dans la terreur, le sadisme et tout ça!

/ I was sick, all year I had colitis. Towards the end, my parents came to get me, panicking..... So there were even physical symptoms. We'd arrive at two o'clock in the afternoon. We'd wait and watch him: he's coming... he was coming. the door would open and he'd come in. You see, it was theatre: "Written test. Take a piece of paper. "About the food! We couldn't digest it. No wonder I had colitis! ... I walked around terrified, sadism and all! [10].

Similar aggression can be in a group of friends: the offender uses derogatory and hurtful nicknames. He may humiliate the interlocutor in front of everyone. Aggression can be present in the workplace: the boss gives orders using rude comments - even in the presence of other colleagues - towards the employee or his work.

Humiliation can be public or private. Criticism from the critic is constant, humiliating and unconstructive.

Aggressive relations also take place between parents and children: the child is given funny nicknames, insulted or devalued, saying that he/she is useless or does not know how to do anything.

Types of verbal aggression. Different researchers classify verbal aggression according to different parameters.

For example, E. I. Sheigal, analysing verbal aggression, distinguishes the following forms - explicit, implicit and manipulative.

Explicit verbal aggression is expressed in a sharp, insulting form, accompanied by threats, demands, invectives.

Implicit verbal aggression is based on indirect speech acts.

Manipulative verbal aggression is based on defamation [12].

First of all, the markers of agonal strategy are paraverbal and prosodic techniques, which are manifested, for example, in the choice of the topic of conversation or gestures, tone of voice, etc.

A subject whose speech demonstrates agonality leans forward, makes a cutting gesture with his hand in an attempt to stop the interlocutor, raises his voice, tries to accelerate the pace of speech, ignores the interlocutors' attempts to take the floor or change the topic.

Agonality is also manifested in interrupting the interlocutor, in repeated nomination marking the challenge and denying the argumentative value of the interlocutor's rejoinder, in the repetition of one's own rejoinder, increasing the speech pressure, etc. In addition to repetition, agonal markers and operators here are modal-evaluative speech reflexes used with polemical challenge.

Those present in such a dialogue express sympathy for the victim of verbal aggression or the offender, depending on their attitude to the actors:

Oh ben; non?; faut pas exagerer. / Well, don't exaggerate.

Tactics of agonal strategy. Three tactics within the agonal strategy can be distinguished, which can be arranged on a gradational scale according to the degree of increasing confrontation:

1. the tactic of detachment,
2. tactics of opposition,
3. tactics of polemics.

1. Markers of detachment (distance).

Distance tactics are often used in political debates and election campaigns. In this kind of polemics agonality is very clearly manifested. Each of the participants in the debates positions himself, indicating his personality and ideological position.

For example, F. Hollande in his election campaign indirectly created a negative image of his opponent N. Sarkozy as a defender of the rich and the class division of the people, without naming him or saying so directly:

- Pendant de trop nombreuses années, les Français se sont systématiquement opposés les uns aux autres ; / - For too many years, the French have been systematically pitted against each other;

- qui connaît les vrais sujets et se permet de donner des leçons, en se présentant comme un champion de la vérité. / - Knowing the true problems and allowing himself to give lessons, presenting himself as a champion of the truth.

Sarkozy, as usual, enters the polemical interaction head-on:

- "J'ai écouté M. Hollande, c'est un classique, ce qu'il a dit," a-t-il déclaré ;/ "I listened to Mr Hollande, it's a classic, what he said," he said;

- "C'est notre tâche, Monsieur Hollande, d'être vrai." - "Our task, Mr Hollande, is to be truthful" [13].

François Hollande has already gained some superiority over Nicolas Sarkozy because he forced the latter to put himself on the defensive from the very beginning.

In such polemics, false politeness is often used, which is actually a verbal aggression, an attack of the opponent. Ironic repetitions *Vous terminez / you finish*, and accusation of insincerity and lies *Ce n'est pas vrai / it is not true*.

The following types of attacks can be distinguished: *ad personam* attacks, *ad hominem* attacks.

*Ad personam* attacks are directed at the person as a person. It is a process of vilification, verbal aggression, designed to show a person incapable of thinking or acting because of his or her character, contrary to the qualities necessary for the fulfilment of the task at hand, or the absence of these qualities.

This was the case with Nicolas Sarkozy's statement "*Pour être président de la République, il faut être calme / To be president of the Republic, one must be calm*" to Ségolène Royale in 2007, referring to the "healthy rage" of "*une colère saine*" [13].

*Ad hominem* attacks are also directed at the individual, but insofar as they represent an ideology, the collective opinion of an institutional group defending its doctrine.

They say to the interlocutor, "*Tu es une de ces personnes qui pensent que... / You are one of those people who think that...*". This kind of attack is a strategy of influencing the other person, which strips them of all individuality, branding them as incapable of thinking for themselves.

Thus, in the debate between Nicolas Sarkozy and Ségolène Royale, the two candidates for the French presidency, there was a difference in the style of address.

While Ségolène Royale used "*je*" and "*ils*" to make the connection between "*elle*" and "*eux*", Nicolas Sarkozy chose a more impersonal, detached manner, using "*nous*" and "*vous*", addressing his debate partner in a very direct manner.

Nicolas Sarkozy used politeness in a very peculiar way, because it was the very fact of being within the limits of politeness that allowed him to be more aggressive towards a woman than is normally allowed in society. Therefore, the use of the forms "*madame*" and "*you*" can be understood as deviant or abstract, as they create the illusion of deference, while the content is full of jabs and innuendos.

### 2. Markers of opposition.

*Opposition is connected with the propositional content plan of speech interaction and can be reduced to the speech acts of disagreement and refutation. Its most used markers are "mais quand même! / but all the same"; "ah non quand même / 'Oh no!': "ben tout de même! / Well all the same; however!" etc.*

### 3. polemic markers.

*Polemics as a discussion of controversial issues in everyday dialogue is connected, first of all, with interpersonal acts of challenge and reproach. The most extreme manifestation of speech agonal conflict is open insults, invectives, and unconventional affects.*

*A milder marker of conflict and a means of overcoming it is irony, which allows the speaker to "gain the upper hand" without wasting emotions:*

- A : [...] *et là tu vois là, ça-ça m'est-ça-enfin ça m'est vraiment pas possible de faire autrement... / and there, now you see that I really can't do anything about it...*

- B : *Ben voyons! C'est parfait, n'changez rien! / of course not! Everything is perfect, don't change a thing! [10].*

In these examples, agonal strategy is intertwined with mimetic strategy, as the speaker often tries to "smooth out" the aggressive effect of agonal strategy (laughter, jokes, etc.)

Denial and counterargumentative tactics - their markers "*mais / but*"; "*je ne sais pas / I don't know*"; "*tu ne peux pas savoir / you can't know*" - always manifest agonal strategy and are used in the three listed tactics.

## 4 Conclusions

Dialogue is characterised by a certain dialectic: agreement often hides a hidden disagreement, and vice versa, disagreement can be transformed into agreement or at least not lead the interaction to failure.

In order for dialogue to take place, participants in communication try to use various conversational strategies, which, can be reduced to two main ones: 1) avoiding sharp corners and 2) the appearance of negotiation.

A priori disagreements are not a threat to the normal flow of dialogue, they are even necessary for the search for truth in the discussion. In this respect, Montaigne's phrase is very indicative: "In the world there have never been two identical opinions".

The communicative dialectic allows, through agonality, to express aggression, insult and other feelings as a result of communication, but also feelings that have not been completed, i.e. they express neither agreement nor disagreement.

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