"O Feminismo Finalmente Venceu" [Feminism Finally Won]: Misogynistic and Antifeminist Metapragmatics Disguised as Freedom of Expression / *"O feminismo finalmente venceu": metapragmáticas misóginas e antifeministas disfarçadas de liberdade de expressão*

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ABSTRACT

In this research,[1] we aim to analyze how misogyny establishes itself in an interaction on *X* (formerly *Twitter*) to legitimize hate speech, under the argument of opinion defense. Theoretically, in light of Interactional Sociolinguistics and Pragmatics, we conceive that impoliteness strategies contribute to the construction of linguistic-discursive violence scenarios in online-mediated interactions, as they both reduce interlocutive distance and generate sexist, misogynistic, patriarchal, and antifeminist metapragmatics. Methodologically, we adopted a qualitative approach to analyze an interaction on X based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria proposed in this study, using the netnographic method. Analytically, we observed that interlocutors C, E, and F frequently used impoliteness strategies in constructing opinion-based discourses to attack feminism and legitimize hate speech.

KEYWORDS: Impoliteness; Linguistic-discursive violence; Sexism; Misogyny

RESUMO

Almejamos analisar, nesta pesquisa, como a misoginia se estabelece em uma interação no X (antigo Twitter*), sob o argumento de defesa de opinião, para legitimar discursos de ódio. No âmbito teórico, concebemos, à luz da Sociolinguística Interacional e da Pragmática, que as estratégias de impolidez colaboram com a construção de cenários de violência linguístico-discursiva em interações mediadas on-line, na medida em que tanto reduzem a distância interlocutiva quanto geram metapragmáticas machistas, misóginas, patriarcais e antifeministas. No âmbito metodológico, inscrevemo-nos em uma abordagem qualitativa para, a partir do método netnográfico, analisarmos uma interação no X a partir dos critérios de inclusão e de exclusão propostos neste estudo. No âmbito analítico, constatamos que os interlocutores C, E e F se valeram, com frequência, de estratégias de impolidez na construção de discursos pautados na defesa de opinião para atacar o feminismo e legitimar discursos de ódio.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Impolidez; Violência linguístico-discursiva; Sexismo; Misoginia

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Initial Remarks

During the period of social distancing resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, the rate of domestic violence against women increased drastically in China, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, and Brazil (Marques *et al*., 2020). In addition to statistics, this scenario encompasses not only physical violence but also psychological, moral, sexual, and linguistic-discursive violence, in line with the framework of this research. In turn, the linguistic-discursive violence can occur with the use of disqualifying expressions (insults and verbal abuse), which construct meanings in various interactions and convey discourses that reinforce oppression against women through sexist, misogynistic, and patriarchal sociocultural practices.

This theme should constitute a primary agenda in our society, given its organization within a patriarchal, dominating, and inherently sexist system. Therefore, the countless types of violence experienced by women on a daily basis in Brazil, coupled with the rise of hate speech on social media platforms,[2] alone justify our intention to shed light on the linguistic-discursive resources present in violent online-mediated interactions (Thompson, 2018),[3] Above all, we conceive that if language is (inter)actional, linguistic-discursive violence becomes indexed through impoliteness strategies (linguistic domain); mobilizes hegemonic ideologies across various sociocultural practices (sociodiscursive domain); and especially constructs itself based on the meanings that emerge from interlocutive instances (sociointeractional domain).

This panorama motivates us to analyze how misogyny establishes itself in an interaction on *X* (formerly *Twitter*) to legitimize hate speech, under the argument of opinion defense. Theoretically, we conceive that impoliteness strategies (Culpeper, 1996) not only lead to a violent decrease in interlocutory distance (Albuquerque; Muniz, 2022) but also give rise to metapragmatics (Silverstein; Urban, 1996; Signorini, 2008) that are sexist, misogynistic, patriarchal, and antifeminist, within the framework of Interactional Sociolinguistics and Pragmatics. Methodologically, we assert that interactions comprise

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[2] Social networks – a term originating from the humanities – encompass a wide spectrum of online social groupings dedicated to all kinds of activities; establish ties based on common interests; facilitate knowledge sharing; and enable subjects to project themselves politically, socially, and culturally (Martino, 2014).

[3] THOMPSON, John B. Mediated Interaction in the Digital Age. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *[S. l.]*, v. 37, n. 1, pp. 1-26, 2018. Available at: http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0263276418808592. Accessed on: Mar 19, 2024.

co(n)textually situated utterances, viewed through the lens of the netnographic method (Kozinets, 2010),[4] within a qualitative approach (Chizzotti, 2003). Analytically, this methodological framework enables us to scrutinize emerging violent metapragmatics from interactions, aiming to understand the sociocultural expectations imposed on women concerning the feminist cause.

1 The Metadiscursive Struggle Based on Misogynistic and Antifeminist Metapragmatics

We can assert that words by themselves are not inherently violent. Since the emergence of the notion that we can do things with words (Austin, 1975), an undeniable epistemic turn has been marked concerning the language use and the linguistic-discursive aspects involved in the meaning construction. By assuming the perspective that speaking entails acting, Austin (1975) breaks with the dichotomy he himself proposed – constative acts (describing actions) *versus* performative acts (performing actions) – and concludes that language actions invariably perform, taking into account the utterance (locutionary act), the force of the statement (ilocutionary act), and its impact on the interlocutors (perlocutionary act). In referring to a continuously provisional performance, Butler (1997, p. 51) emphasizes that its (provisional) success is not guaranteed by the intentions accompanying the speech act, but rather by the fact that it "… echoes prior actions and accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices." Therefore, this implies that "no term or statement can function performatively without the accumulating and dissimulating historicity of force" (Butler, 1997, p. 51).

Building this argumentative path, which we align with, Silva and Alencar (2013) start from the premise that language constitutes a mode of action. They assert that linguistic violence takes shape as a practice of positioning "the other – particularly those representing race, gender, sexuality, and territory one wishes to avoid – in a vulnerable position" (Silva; Alencar, 2013, pp. 136-137),[5] aiming to diminish, devalue, ridicule,

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[4] KOZINETS, Robert V. *Netnography*: Doing Etnographic Research Online. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi and Singapore: SAGE, 2010.
[5] In Portuguese: "o outro – especialmente aquele que representa a raça, o gênero, a sexualidade e o território que não se quer habitar – num lugar vulnerável."

insult, defame, scorn, and/or violate their condition. It is not necessary to engage extensively in online-mediated interactions to recognize that "social media platforms are becoming a stage for interaction that at times becomes more contentious than harmonious" (Cabral; Lima, 2017, p. 87),[6] particularly when these interactions involve people who are subjugated, vulnerable, and stripped of their own subjectivity, by merely existing.

Pereira and Gamas (2021, p. 228) highlight that sexist practices and displays of male domination "... perpetuate a system that subjugates men themselves, listing physical attributes, character traits, organizational skills, and a tendency towards violence."[7] In our analysis, this system correlates with the *mimimi* culture construction, which encompasses heterogeneous sociocultural practices that delegitimize "a previous or potential speech act – seeking to control the future metapragmatic[8] evaluation framework or preemptively label it as illegitimate,"[9] as defined by Pinto (2019, p. 223). It is not unusual for the *mimimi* [whining] discourse to be echoed by both men and women affected by sexist practices and held captive by displays of male dominance. We suggest that this sociocultural construction (the *mimimi*) sometimes arises from machismo (and misogyny – we add) as byproduct(s) of toxic masculinity (Nigro; Baracat, 2018).

Concerning online-mediated interactions, Pereira and Gamas (2021) caution against the assumption that technological advancements and the subsequent establishment of social media norms inherently promote civilized behavior. They (2021, p. 217) define machismo as "a set of reactive feelings aimed at diminishing the female gender and genders considered marginalized, promoting various forms of violence, physical or symbolic" (Pereira; Gamas, 2021, p. 217).[10] It is increasingly common for machismo and its deeply violent effects to gain traction in society (Pereira; Gamas, 2021). This violence originates from the notion that productive tasks and reproductive tasks should be assigned to men and women, respectively, because motherhood is associated

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[6] In Portuguese: "as redes sociais vão se constituindo como palco de interação que, por vezes, se fazem mais conflituosas do que harmônicas."

[7] In Portuguese: "... perpetuam um sistema que subjuga os próprios homens, elencando características físicas, de caráter, de capacidade organizacional e de ímpeto pela violência."

[8] We will address metapragmatics later on.

[9] In Portuguese: "um ato de fala prévio ou potencial – buscando controlar o futuro enquadre de avaliação metapragmática ou projetá-lo desde antes de sua realização como ilegítimo."

[10] In Portuguese: "um conjunto de sentimentos reativos que são produzidos com o intuito de inferiorizar o gênero feminino e os gêneros considerados marginais promovendo várias formas de violência, seja física ou simbólica."

with a sedentary existence and confines women to domestic life, unlike men who engage in activities like hunting, fishing, and warfare (Beauvoir, 1949).[11] From this standpoint, expressing opinions on social media transcends the traditional confines of sedentary roles and challenges the historically constructed silencing of women.

Sexism is defined as "... an attitude towards a person or people based on their biological sex" (Ferrer Pérez; Bosch Fiol, 2000, p. 13).[12] Glick and Fiske (1996) suggest that it can manifest both in hostile forms (hostile actions directed at women) and in benevolent forms ('soft' attitudes towards women, associating them with stereotyped forms or restricted roles). On the other hand, misogyny involves feelings of hatred, rejection, aversion, and contempt that men harbor towards women and femininity (Ferrer Pérez; Bosch Fiol, 2000; Varela, 2012; Tiburi, 2018). Misogyny represents the extreme end of hostile sexism (Ferrer Pérez; Bosch Fiol, 2000), even though it can also manifest subtly (Varela, 2012). In this sense, we assume that linguistic-discursive violence directed at women can occur along a continuum ranging from *benevolent sexism* to *hostile sexism* and *misogyny*, encompassing various kinds of violence: from symbolic to physical.

Misogyny extends beyond the belief that men hold a dominant position over women, it entails "… the relegation of women to the realm of non-productive labour, doubly humiliating in that the actual labour required of them was if anything intensified…" (Wallerstein, 2003, p. 75). As "a damage that has survived through time long before receiving a name" (Moterani; Carvalho, 2016, p. 168),[13] misogyny arises from masculinist hegemonies[14] (Rosostolato, 2018), which promote a sociocultural framework "… directly linked to hatred, violence, oppression, and domination against anyone and everyone who questions the culture of masculinized power" (Moterani; Carvalho, 2016, p. 168).[15] Alambert (1986, p. 1) argues that discriminatory and violent

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[11] BEAUVOIR, Simone de. *Le deuxième sexe*. Paris: Gallimard, 1949.

[12] In Spanish: "una actitud hacia una persona o personas en virtud de su sexo biológico."

[13] In Portuguese: "... rebaixamento das mulheres ao reino do trabalho não produtivo, duplamente humilhante porque o trabalho real exigido delas foi intensificado..."

[14] Masculinist hegemony comprises "a set of laws and norms devised by men for men, in religion, education, politics, economics, psychological and psychiatric knowledge, among others, which aim to protect and guarantee social privileges and uphold andro/phallocentric power" (Rosostolato, 2018, p. 58 – adapted).

[15] In Portuguese: "... diretamente relacionada ao ódio, à violência, à opressão e à dominação contra tudo e todos que questionam a cultura do poder masculinizado."

practices have historically become "refined, sophisticated, but no less unacceptable than in the stone age."[16]

At the time, Twitter was[17] the platform most active in removing tweets containing hateful content and outlined in its Hate Speech Policy the prohibition against violent actions, attacks, threats, or hate speech dissemination. However, it was unable to keep up with the high flow of comments, explaining why we often find violent discourses that were not removed or noticed by the platform (Leite *et al*., 2020). Presently, *X* no longer maintains such policies. Regarding misogyny, we argue that social media platforms must become spaces for engaging in discussions about issues related to government actions and changing the course of public policies (Ruediger *et al*., 2017). Additionally, these platforms ought to enable socio-historical transformations (Martino, 2014); inspire hope for the possibility of change (Castells, 2012);[18] and also promote education for gender equality, recognizing that men and women have the same intellectual potential (Passos, 2019). In short, it is necessary to change "the balance of power, which still leans towards the masculine" (Passos, 2019, p. 153).[19]

Social encounters mobilize people to perform a series of complex and heterogeneous actions, which include linguistic activities to some extent. In online-mediated interactions, the richness of established relationships and rituals can provide insights into how conflicts arise in digital environments, including those that reinforce oppression against attacked social groups. These daily violent practices both seek to maintain and reinforce social inequalities and find support in dominant ideologies structurally present in society. Moreover, it is not at all uncommon for metapragmatics of linguistic-discursive violence to be cunningly legitimized by enunciations that shift the weight of these violent acts to the seemingly harmless territory of 'joking' and 'opinion.'

Regarding different types of interaction, Thompson (2018)[20] asserts that online-mediated interaction (the interactional framework assumed in this research) encompasses: (a) extended time and space, since interactants can connect in different places and times; (b) a significantly reduced range of available symbolic cues, as there is no access to

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[16] In Portuguese: "refinadas, sofisticadas, mas nem por isso menos inadmissíveis do que na época da pedra lascada."

[17] We raised this issue since this study was conducted back when the platform was known as *Twitter*.

[18] CASTELLS, Manuel. *Networks of Outrage and Hope*: Social Movements in the Internet Age. 2nd ed. UK/USA: Polity, 2012.

[19] In Portuguese: "a balança de poder, que ainda pende para o masculino."

[20] For reference, see footnote 5.

gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, among other semiotic elements; (c) a dialogic degree of interactivity, since it enables linguistic exchange among interactants; and (d) an involvement of multiple interactants, as language actions involve many-to-many communication. We evaluate that these characteristics intensify the face threatening acts (Goffman, 1967); the impact of impoliteness strategies (Culpeper, 1996); the reduction of interlocutory distance (Albuquerque; Muniz, 2022) to perpetrate violence; the regimentation of misogynistic metapragmatics (Silverstein; Urban, 1996; Signorini, 2008; Pinto, 2019); and the construction of linguistic-discursive violence scenarios. For this reason, we will provide theoretical treatment to these themes, organized into two parts. The first part will address the three waves of (im)politeness studies, while the second will cover the notions of metapragmatics and linguistic-discursive proxemics, which have particularly interfaces with second-wave and third-wave (im)politeness studies.

Politeness studies are epistemically and metaphorically situated within the emergence of three waves: the first wave (micro/linguistic), the second wave (macro/sociodiscursive), and the third wave (meso/sociointeractional). We emphasize that Culpeper (2011b) and Grainger (2011) traverse this socio-historical trajectory. The former recognizes the first two waves and conceptualizes (im)politeness in the interpersonal sphere, based on his literature review – that is, as linguistic material triggering (im)politeness attitudes in particular social contexts, as previously suggested by Haugh (2007a). The latter recognizes the value of all three waves in providing comprehensive insights for broader interactional analyses. To grasp these epistemic pathways, we will consolidate the contributions of each wave.

The first wave, often associated with scholars like Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983), Brown and Levinson (1987), and Culpeper (1996), marks the beginning of a theoretical arsenal of a pancultural nature, supported by the prevalence of studies situated in phrastic domains (between the 1970s and 1980s). This approach conceptualizes (im)politeness in objective dimensions by suggesting the existence of universal linguistic strategies/rules/maxims. In this regard, an interpersonal rhetorical model is proposed, based on recommendations to do not impose, to give options, and to make a feel good (Lakoff, 1973); and to minimize costs, disapproval, disagreement, and antipathy towards the other (and maximize benefits, approval, agreement, and sympathy towards them)

(Leech, 1983). Building upon the notion of face (Goffman, 1967), Brown and Levinson (1987) developed a table with five politeness macro-strategies, inspiring Culpeper (1996) to propose a table with five impoliteness macro-strategies.

Goffman (1967, p. 5) conceives the notion of face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact." Based on this notion, Brown and Levinson (1987) highlight that, to be polite, we can (a) do the FTA (Face Threatening Act) on record without redressive action, baldly, in some specific contexts; do the FTA on record with redressive action either for (b) positive politeness or (c) negative politeness; (d) do the FTA off record and (e) don't do the FTA. Considering impoliteness as the opposite of politeness, Culpeper (1996) predicted that, to be impolite, it would be common to (a) do the FTA (bald on record) – considered here as an impolite action, unlike Brown and Levinson's (1987) first macro-strategy; do the FTA on record using either (b) positive impoliteness or (c) negative impoliteness; (d) do the FTA off record (through insincerity, joking, sarcasm, irony) and (e) withhold the FTA. In the analytical scope, we found that first-wave studies would enable to map the (im)politeness strategies used in online-mediated interactions.

The second wave – exemplified by the works of Eelen (2001), Mills (2003), and Watts (2009) – emerged in response to limitations observed in first-wave studies, which instantiated analyses in a phrastic domain (decontextualized) and from an ethic perspective (evaluation of (im)politeness from the researcher's viewpoint), as highlighted by Eelen (2001), Watts (2009), and Grainger (2011). The second-wave studies shifted the focus towards subjective dimensions, emphasizing the context of enunciation and the emic perspective (evaluation of (im)politeness from the layperson's viewpoint). In addition, Culpeper (2011b) criticized the first-wave studies for oversimplifying the concept of context, arguing that a narrow set of social variables fails to capture the intricacies of interactions. In the second wave, there was an interest in a conception of (im)politeness anchored in socio-discursive struggles (Watts, 2009; Culpeper, 2011b), which become more significant than mere social (in)appropriateness (Haugh; Culpeper, 2018). In the analytical scope, we assume that second-wave studies would enable a focus on both the enunciative context and the socio-discursive aspects (ideology, power, hegemony) that emerge in online-mediated interactions.

The third wave would have emerged in the works of Culpeper (2011b) and Grainger (2011), supported by Kádár and Haugh (2013). However, we argue that the contributions of Terkourafi (2005), Arundale (2006), Haugh (2007b), Bousfield (2008), and Bargiela-Chiappini (2009) fall between the second wave and third wave. Third-wave studies emerge from criticisms leveled at second-wave studies, particularly concerning (a) the neglect of the pragmalinguistic dimension (a prominent attribute in first-wave studies) at the expense of the sociopragmatic dimension (Terkourafi, 2005; Haugh, 2007b; Grainger, 2011; Leech, 2014; Blitvich; Sifianou, 2019); (b) the adherence to coding-decoding communication models (Arundale, 2006; Haugh, 2007b); and (c) the excessive emphasis on the participants' voice in a particular study (Haugh; Culpeper, 2018).

Research affiliated with third-wave studies revisits Goffman's theory by considering face as a relational and interactional phenomenon (Arundale, 2006). Face can be threatened intentionally (open and malicious insults), incidentally (unplanned side effects), and accidentally (gaffes) (Goffman, 1967; Bousfield, 2008). In turn, Culpeper (2011a) explains that intentional threats often stem from affective issues (expressions of anger, hatred, or rage) for coercion (realignment of values) and for entertainment (use of criticism, ridicule, and mockery). These studies portray (im)politeness as a negotiated implication in interactions (Haugh, 2007b), observed empirically from conversational data (Terkourafi, 2005; Bargiela-Chiappini, 2009) and demonstrated in various social practices (Kádár; Haugh, 2013). Third-wave studies propose that linguistic actions are conventionally linked to contexts where (im)politeness is activated (Culpeper, 2011b).

The significant epistemic turn from the second to the third wave lies in the conception that (im)politeness – from a psychologizing approach to an ethnomethodological approach – is "a social, interactional achievement, rather than a product of speaker intention or the hearer interpretation" (Grainger, 2011, p. 184). Based on these successive epistemic turns, we believe that third-wave studies would allow for the analysis of (im)politeness strategies (first wave) and discursive disputes governed by (counter)hegemonic frameworks (second wave) in co(n)textually situated interactions. This perspective challenges the notion that sentences are inherently (im)polite (Fraser; Nolen, 1981), and also questions the assumption that discursive disputes precede

interactions. In the latter case, Blommaert (2001, p. 15)[21] emphasizes the need to combat "... *a priori* statements on power relations [since they] are used as perspectives on discourse (e.g. 'power is bad,' 'politicians are manipulators,' 'media are ideology-reproducing machines')..." In online-mediated interactions, we conceive that interlocutors are constantly negotiating interlocutory distances in the (non)verbal sphere (performing proxemic regulations) and managing more/less violent metapragmatics.

Linguistic-discursive proxemics is a construct derived from two foundational concepts. The first is proxemics, introduced by Hall (1963), which explores the social meaning of space. The second is verbal proxemics, a concept coined by Carreira (1997), extending Hall's proposal to the verbal dimension, correlating closeness and distance to (a) symmetric and asymmetric relationships (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1992); (b) the elocutive, alocutive, or delocutive speech acts execution (Charaudeau, 1992); and, at last, (c) the politeness system (Brown; Levinson, 1987). Building upon these concepts, linguistic-discursive proxemics is conceived "… as a mechanism that regulates the distances established/constructed by the interactors both in the material dimensions (cotext) and in the subjective dimensions (context), which encompasses verbal and non-verbal domains" (Albuquerque; Muniz, 2022, p. 8591).[22] These spaces are dynamically negotiated within the interaction, which regulates metapragmatics of greater/lesser violence, depending on the degree of interlocutory closeness or distance.

Reducing interlocutory distance can pose a threat to people's territoriality and create scenarios of violence that devalue and silence them. This proxemics regulation can give rise to metapragmatics that devalue and silence. We can define metapragmatics as "socio-cultural structures and processes of linguistic-discursive and political-ideological nature... [with] the function of describing, evaluating, conditioning, and guiding language uses in oral, written [and digital] interaction" (Signorini, 2008, p. 117 – additions ours).[23] Through such metapragmatics, there are efforts to undermine dissenting discourses and silence women by employing strategies of positive impoliteness (Culpeper, 1996) such

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[21] BLOMMAERT, Jan. Context is/as Critique. *Critique of Anthropology*, v. 21, n. 1, pp. 13-32, 2001. Available at: http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0308275X0102100102. Accessed on: Mar 19, 2024.
[22] In Portuguese: "... como mecanismo que regula as distâncias estabelecidas/construídas pelos/as interagentes tanto nas dimensões materiais (cotexto) quanto nas dimensões subjetivas (contexto), o que engloba, por conseguinte, instâncias verbais e não verbais."
[23] In Portuguese: "... estruturas e processos socioculturais de natureza lingüístico-discursiva e político-ideológica... [com] função tanto de descrever e avaliar quanto de condicionar e orientar os usos da língua na interação oral, escrita [e digital]."

as indifference and trivialization; as well as to invade women's various spaces and assert male dominance using strategies of negative impoliteness (Culpeper, 1996). In both situations, motivations may arise from affective issues that restrain or entertain (Culpeper, 2011a), creating intentional face threatening acts (Goffman, 1967; Bousfield, 2008). Consequently, these metapragmatics are aligned with an oppressive patriarchal system that sanctions and facilitates violence against women.

Arising from different interlocutive contexts, metapragmatics can spark metadiscursive disputes (Silverstein; Urban, 1996) with metapragmatic orientation capable of describing and regulating "… linguistic uses by groups and individuals positioned differently within structures and social networks of power and authority" (Signorini, 2008, p. 119).[24] For instance, by arguing that they are merely expressing their opinions or engaging in jest, interlocutors legitimize their own actions. Under the guise of freedom of expression and humor, they seek to avoid accountability for the linguistic-discursive violence instigated and the often criminal practices, such as insults and discrimination. To do so, they rely on socially established and reinforced political-ideological orders, contextually recalled and sustained, rarely resulting in accountability. Thus, the labels of freedom of expression and jest serve as mechanisms to uphold oppression against women; and also exhibit levels of misogyny that surface through violent metapragmatics, whether directly or indirectly.

2 Netnography on *X*: Intersubjectivities in Perspective

Since online interactions have acquired a central role in people's daily lives and constitute complex social practices, we adhere to a qualitative approach. This methodology enables us to explore the emerging linguistic-discursive violence within interactions, taking into account the intersubjective dynamics and the socioculturally situated specificities. This approach enables us to conduct diverse analyses that capture multiple dimensions of the same phenomena (Chizzotti, 2003). The singularity of interactions allows us to conceive that meanings are updated within the interaction itself,

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[24] In Portuguese: "... usos linguísticos por grupos e indivíduos diferentemente posicionados em estruturas e redes sociais de poder e autoridade."

highlighting the importance of generating and analyzing data intersubjectively rather than viewing interactions as ready-made information to be collected.

Within the framework of qualitative research, we have embraced netnography, a term coined by Kozinets in 1997 as a branch of the ethnographic model. This method emerges as an adaptation of participant observation ethnographic procedures, with a primary focus on online component (Kozinets, 2010).[25] Similar to traditional ethnography, netnography is essentially observational approach (Kozinets, 2010).[26] With its emphasis on language usage in the online sphere, netnography provides the necessary qualitative tools and guidelines for this research to explore social and human behaviors in virtual environment. Thus, it fits into the type of online research in communities (Kozinets, 2010),[27] through which we consider various manifestations of impoliteness that reduce interlocutive distances to cause offense, as well as regulate sexist, misogynistic, patriarchal, and antifeminist metapragmatics.

In light of netnography, as a qualitative approach, we adopted the following procedures: (a) we used advanced search tools on *X* (at the time, *Twitter*) to select interactions that exhibited signs of misogyny disguised as opinion defense, in line with the goals of this research; (b) we selected interactions on *X* using specific expressions such as *broad*, *broad*, *my opinion*, *whining*, *whiny*, *whiny*, *feminism*, *a good woman is...*, *a woman should...*, *take a break*, *activist*, *women are like...*, *women are just like...*, *woman's opinion*, *feminist whiny*, *it could only be a woman/broad/broad*, *a woman who... does not deserve respect*, and *a woman must be...*[28] However, we had access to an immensely extensive dataset and (c) we established a first exclusion criterion: disregarding texts lacking comments from other internet users. This process led us to 14 posts.

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[25] For reference, see footnote 6.
[26] For reference, see footnote 6.
[27] For reference, see footnote 6.
[28] In Portuguese, the expressions are: *muié, cuié, minha opinião, mimimi, mimizento, mimizenta, feminismo, mulher boa é..., mulher pra mim deve..., descansa militante, mulher é igual..., mulher é que nem..., opinião de mulher, femimiminista, só podia ser mulher/muié/cuié, mulher que... não merece respeito* e *mulher tem que ser...* In addition, we emphasize that the expressions *muié, cuié, mimimi, mimizento, mimizenta*, and *femimiminista* do not have a direct translation into English. Therefore, we provided a minimally equivalent translation. The first two are pejorative expressions related to the women's image, with the caveat that *cuié* would allude to *a person who works with a spoon* – in Brazilian Portuguese, there is a phonetic similarity: *colher* (*spoon*) and *cuié*. Finally, we justify the repetition of some terms in English due to the absence of equivalents for two distinct terms in Portuguese.

Continuing with these procedures, (d) we established two inclusion criteria to refine the search and better fulfill the research objective: tweets or memes discussing hate speech against women and rationalizing this discourse by framing it as a joke, humor, or freedom of expression. Using these criteria, we identified 5 posts. For this paper, (e) we selected the interaction that simultaneously demonstrated: the highest density of linguistic-discursive violence; the greatest misalignment among participants in evaluating the text (violence or joke); and the highest number of retweets and likes. Through this action, (f) we captured the selected interaction; (g) we generated a Portable Document Format (PDF) containing the interaction for analysis in the next section; and finally (h) we examined the linguistic-discursive resources emerging from the interaction.

3 Metapragmatic Regulations: Antifeminism and Opinion Defense

From the theoretical-methodological perspective adopted in this paper, we will analyze an interaction that took place on *X* (at the time, *Twitter*) in January 2021, a period when the world was facing the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. As we can see in the following, interlocutor F posted the comment *mulher anulando opinião de homem x homem anulando opinião de mulher* [*woman canceling man's opinion x man canceling woman's opinion*][29] with emojis related to approval and disapproval, respectively. The post was published in response to a previous post, whose print screen[30] served as evidence for interlocutor F's argument. We will begin the analysis with the motivating post (comments from interlocutors A, B, C, D, and E) in Table 1, and we will arrive at the analysis of the post made by interlocutor F.

F mulher anulando opinião de homem: 😍🥰❤️�’😌 homem anulando opinião de mulher: 🤢🤮😡🤬😤	
A homens platinados tds gostosos parabéns	109 comments 1299 shares 3407 likes
B na minha singela opinião homens só ficam gostosos de cabelo platinado se eles ja forem gostosos antes disso	6 comments 0 shares

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[29] Since this is a conversation among Brazilians, we will retain the transcription in Portuguese. Nevertheless, we will offer an English translation [within brackets] for ease of understanding.
[30] We transcribed the print screen of the post to further preserve the identity of internet users.

senao fica parecendo um filhote de cruz credo c deus me livre	144 likes
C Mulher falando da aparência de homem 😍🥰❤️😘😊 Homem falando da aparência de mulher 😆🤢🤬😡🤧	3 comments 9 shares 203 likes
D o feminismo finalmente venceu	1 comments 0 shares 23 likes
E Isso não eh feminismo 🤝	1 comments 0 shares 37 likes
D ninguém te perguntou nada, homem ✍️	0 comments 0 shares 9 likes
All the post: 61 *retweets*, 6 *tweets* with comments and 748 likes	

Table 1: Post published by interlocutor F. *Source*: X (2021)[31]

The analysis of the interaction preceding interlocutor F's post began with interlocutor A's statement aimed at a specific group of men: *homens platinados tds gostosos parabens* [platinum-haired men, they are so hot congratulations]. Such a statement could be interpreted as a compliment, serving as a positive politeness strategy (Brown; Levinson, 1987); or as a type of men objectification (devaluation), functioning as a positive impoliteness strategy (Culpeper, 1996), depending on the internet users' evaluation. However, interlocutor B took a different stance, suggesting that these men would only be attractive if they were already so before bleaching their hair. This not only contradicted A's evaluation (that platinum-haired men were attractive) but also criticized the decision to bleach the hair, maximizing disapproval (Leech, 1983). Under this perspective, interlocutor B insulted the group using a positive impoliteness strategy (Culpeper, 1996) for entertainment (use of criticism, ridicule, and mockery) (Culpeper, 2011a). In addition, she intentionally attacked the face of this group (Goffman, 1967; Bousfield, 2008), particularly by using *filhote de cruz credo* [weirdo]. Beyond the offense produced, this expression invoked a Christian-origin statement representing repulsion, disgust, or discomfort associated (in the analysis) with these men's image.

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[31] Adaptation to English language: "F: woman cancelling a man's opinion; men cancelling woman's opinion; A: platinum-haired men, they are so hot congratulations; B: In my humble opinion, men only look attractive with platinum hair if they were already attractive before that; otherwise, it ends up resembling a spawn of weirdo and God, save me; C: Woman talking about a man's looks; Man talking about a woman's looks; E: feminism finally won; E: This is feminism; d: nobody asked you anything, man."

Interlocutor B's criticism would be softened by the maxim of modesty (Leech, 1983), as she prefaced her statement with *na minha singela opinião* [in my humble opinion] and somewhat depreciated her own judgment. If we were to strictly adhere to first-wave studies, we might infer that the expression would have mitigated the imposition generated by the comment, as interlocutor B would refrain from asserting absolute truths and instead open up the possibility for other viewpoints to be shared. However, *singela* [humble] seemed to function as a kind of false modesty, suggesting that its use leaned towards constructing an ironic statement rather than truly mitigation the criticism. Three factors contribute to this broader analysis of the comment. The first is that the statement as a whole relied solely on this expression to mitigate the impoliteness. The second is that a single isolated expression could not fully mitigate the impoliteness of the entire statement. The third is that interlocutor B did not appear overly concerned with preserving her own face to the extent of including a mitigating expression (unlike what might be expected in face-to-face interactions). Despite not being directly aimed at a specific interlocutor, we emphasize that the comment set off a chain of violent language actions, inherently linked to masculinist hegemony (Rosostolato, 2018).

Subsequently, impoliteness manifested more prominently in interlocutor C's comment: *mulher falando da aparência de homem* [woman talking about a man's looks] (accompanied by approval emojis) *x homem falando da aparência de mulher* [man talking about a woman's looks] (accompanied by disapproval emojis). In reaction to the criticism directed at the male audience, this comment highlighted the perceived hypocrisy of allowing women to discuss male appearance while condemning men for discussing female appearance. Arising from a common sense anchored in sexist, misogynistic, patriarchal, and anti-feminist sociocultural practices, this discourse suggests that men and women historically possess the same rights and, therefore, should have equal freedom of expression and censorship. Because he is a man and demonstrated a total lack of awareness regarding the linguistic-discursive violence experienced by women, it is important to note that interlocutor C's evaluation heightened (meta)discursive struggles (Silverstein; Urban, 1996; Watts, 2009; Culpeper, 2011b), regulating sexist, misogynistic, patriarchal, and anti-feminist metapragmatics that revealed a notorious socio-historical blindness. It is common for comments of this nature to be disguised as opinion, even claiming ideological neutrality, despite the impossibility of such a stance.

In response to interlocutor C's comment, interlocutor D stated that *o feminismo finalmente venceu* [feminism finally won]. This wry statement implied that the previous comment lacked validity, suggesting that within the feminist agenda, women have the freedom to criticize men however they wish, without the ability for men to 'fight back.' This inference stems from the common association of the construction *Y finally won* with irony in Brazilian sociocultural practices in cyberspace. For instance, when someone complains that a especific situation is the fault of feminism, communism, or 'the left,' this expression is usually employed. Interlocutor D employed a coercive impoliteness strategy (Culpeper, 2011a) doing a FTA off record (Culpeper, 1996) and maximized costs to the interlocutor (Leech, 1983) regarding an inferential overload generated by indirectness. It is plausible that interlocutor D aimed to provoke a realignment of values, prompting interlocutor C to grap the cue stated and reconsider what she deemed absurd.

When replying that *isso não eh feminismo* [this is no feminism], interlocutor E showed signs that he had not grasped the irony in interlocutor D's statement. Furthermore, he attempted to use the handshake emoji as if to seal an agreement and injunctionally realign the values of interlocutor D with his own, as a coercive impoliteness strategy (Culpeper, 2011a). Undeniably violent, misogynistic, and illegitimate, this action intensified the (meta)discursive struggle (Silverstein; Urban, 1996; Watts, 2009; Culpeper, 2011b) that led to the ironic response: *ninguém te perguntou nada, homem* [*nobody asked you anything, man*]. Based on the assumed triumph of the feminist movement, this specific remark triggered a wave of subsequent criticisms and insults, which we will not address here as they were not the focus of interlocutor F's post.

It is evident to us that there's an ideological misalignment established by interlocutor D and interlocutor E, who belong to groups experiencing political and social tension. This undoubtedly affects how they interpret each other's statements. In impoliteness studies, we highlight that impoliteness strategies (linguistic dimension) contribute to the establishment of a gender-based metadiscursive struggle (sociodiscursive dimension). This often results in highly violent online-mediated interaction (sociointeractional dimension), as interlocutors reduce the interlocutive distance between each other to offend and construct metapragmatics that regiment a (counter)hegemonic clash. By posting *ninguém te perguntou nada, homem* [nobody asked you anything, man], interlocutor D implied that, due to gender, interlocutor E would not

be legitimate to express an 'opinion,' since he would not be legitimate to determine what this movement would (not) be, as he wasn't part of the feminist movement. Therefore, we deduce that this scenario likely prompted interlocutor F's subsequent post.

We then turn to the reaction post that forms the basis of this analysis. It is worth noting, according to interlocutor F, that the interaction seemed to lay bare a double standard: women and men faced opposite judgments despite engaging in the 'same' behavior, which he saw as hypocritical. Similar to interlocutor C, we noticed that interlocutor F used emojis that negatively evaluated male behavior and positively evaluated female behavior. He seemed to underscore the idea that women could disregard the opinions of the other group at will (being well-received and accepted), while men would face severe criticism if they did the same. From this perspective, he appeared to assume that women were not the oppressed segment in society; instead, they held a superior position to men in the social hierarchy, which he viewed as unfair to men.

As a marginalized and oppressed group, efforts to break down gender asymmetries and emancipate women are often seen as resistance by those who feel their basic rights have been violated. Feminist achievements, which aim to achieve gender equity, are rejected for focusing on women and sidelining men, thus reinforcing the perpetuation of sexist, misogynistic, patriarchal, and anti-feminist metapragmatics. In this sense, it is not about disregarding men's opinions on any issue, but rather challenging the legitimacy of those who lack the qualifications to weigh in on what feminism is (not), in order to progress towards social justice. Meanwhile, men have symbolically and physically canceled women's opinions in multiple social instances, which is why statements like *mulher anulando opinião de homem* [woman canceling man's opinion] serve as a modest attempt at historical reparation and advocating for an emancipatory and counter-hegemonic stance that seeks to mitigate (at least) the influence of sexist, misogynistic, patriarchal, and anti-feminist metapragmatics.

In the ongoing interaction, we observe a prevailing idea that men are restricted in their freedom of expression (due to being seen as oppressors and needing to be careful about what they say). Even though there's no explicit mention of this idea (freedom of expression/right to opinion), it's important to note that the roots of this notion are hidden in the social structure that supports it and likely forms the basis of the criticism being voiced. To counter this perceived 'loss of rights' and reaffirm their position in the social

hierarchy, men opt to attack what they view as enabling a supposed female supremacy. Hence, the critique of feminism appears to align with such a perspective, serving a project that is undeniably masculinist in its dominance (Rosostolato, 2018).

In this statement, we see interlocutor F exercising a metapragmatic function by attempting to regulate how others' discourse should be interpreted, hovering between implicit and explicit meanings. While the comment didn't explicitly mention feminism, it was evident that the criticism was aimed at the achievements attributed to the feminist movement, as reflected in subsequent responses in the interaction, such as *Seria a internet um local adequado para militância feminista?* and *Até que ponto esse feminismo é legítimo?* [Is the internet an appropriate place for feminist activism?; How legitimate is this brand of feminism?] Beyond such inquiries, the interaction triggered attacks against women, feminist movement, and the society that welcomes this cause, largely through the use of positive impoliteness strategies (Culpeper, 1996), which simultaneously restrain, entertain (Culpeper, 2011a), reduce interlocutive distance to violate the interactants, and regiment misogynistic metapragmatics, whose impacts become even more evident in an online-mediated interaction (Thompson, 2018).[32]

In essence, the interaction revealed a mindset rooted in misogyny that undermines the feminist movement, suppresses voices, and seeks to justify the supposed freedom of expression of the oppressor (namely, those with advantages over the targeted group). The silencing and defense of opinions are indexicalized by linguistic-discursive expressions laden with offensive and misogynistic connotations, relying on (non)verbal semiosis uses that express irony in criticizing the 'privileges afforded to women.' Therefore, we witness a worldview ingeniously shaped by misogynistic sociocultural norms, aiming to rescue patriarchal traditions and incite violence against women across different interactions, including online-mediated interactions.

Final Remarks

Aligned with the regulation of proxemics and the regimentation of metapragmatics in which discourses are constructed, the evaluation of (im)polite interactions converges towards a perspective of scientific inquiry guided by the principle

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[32] For reference, see footnote 5.

of interpretability and the perception of culturally situated data. Therefore, the combination of such theoretical trajectory with the foundations of qualitative research enables the understanding of a particular issue from multiple possible perspectives, considering the subjectivity of all social agents engaged in the research process. Thus, a datum should not be seen as finalized and definitive, but rather as continuously co-constructed, where the apprehension of its meanings essentially depends on the theoretical framework employed and the intersubjectivities of the social actors/actress.

In this way, it was possible for us to observe how online-mediated interactions serve as vehicles for encapsulating beliefs and behaviors, whose influence is amplified by their capacity for widespread dissemination, attributable to the interactional status assumed on *X*. Based on our data, we found that interlocutors C, E, and F often used the discourse of opinion defense to attack feminism (attributing it with providing unwarranted 'privileges' to women) and thereby legitimize hate speech. Therefore, this type of resource conveyed actions that incited violence against women, leading to overtly aggressive remarks, consistent with the prevailing discourse in the interaction, which revealed hegemonic, sexist, misogynistic, patriarchal, and antifeminist metapragmatics.

In this sense, many possibilities arise for us to understand how the selection of certain (non)verbal semiosis can trigger specific discourses and thus index particular sociocultural values. Recognizing that utilizing impoliteness strategies – ranging from implicit to explicit –can lead to violence becomes the path to understanding how the marginalization, vulnerability, and erosion of subjectivity of certain subjects permeate various sociocultural practices. Research focusing on examining expressions like "é *só minha opinião* e *descansa, militante*" [it's just my opinion and take a break, activist] to legitimize prejudiced and violent speech acts should increasingly be part of the research agenda of a socially engaged linguistics dedicated to social justice.

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Statement of Author's Contribution

Rodrigo Albuquerque and Suzy de Castro Alves affirm their responsibility for the manuscript. Rodrigo Albuquerque oversaw the study's conception, project design, translation into English, and final approval for publication. Both authors conducted the analysis and interpretation of linguistic-discursive phenomena (data analysis and interpretation), wrote the article, provided critical intellectual content review, and ensured the accuracy and integrity of the entire work.

Research Data and Other Materials Availability

The research text includes all the underlying content within its own manuscript.

Reviews

Due to the commitment assumed by *Bakhtiniana. Revista de Estudos do Discurso* [Bakhtiniana. Journal of Discourse Studies] to Open Science, this journal publishes only reviews that have been authorized by all involved.

Review II

The article titled "'*O Feminismo Finalmente Venceu*' [Feminins Finally Won]: Misogynistic and Antifeminist Metapragmatics Disguised as Freedom of Expression," submitted for publication in the Bakhtiniana Journal, aims to analyze "how misogyny establishes itself in an interaction on *X* (formerly *Twitter*) to legitimize hate speech, under the argument of opinion defense," as outlined in the abstract and introduction of the paper. The proposed objective is clearly stated, and the study's progression aligns coherently with its aims. The theoretical framework draws from Interactional Sociolinguistics and Pragmatics. The authors argue that "impoliteness strategies (Culpeper, 1996) not only lead to a violent decrease in interlocutory distance (Albuquerque; Muniz, 2022) but also give rise to metapragmatics (Silverstein; Urban, 1996; Signorini, 2008) that are sexist, misogynistic, patriarchal, and antifeminist." The authors also present a brief history of the three waves that constituted studies on politeness and impoliteness. The theoretical foundation is current, and the authors demonstrate a thorough understanding of relevant literature while offering original insights that contribute to theoretical advancements in the field. Employing a netnographic method, the methodology, aligned with a qualitative approach, is suitable for the theoretical assumptions underlying the analyses and consistent with the objective of the work. The analyses focus on an interaction on platform X, selected based on clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, and are presented clearly, highlighting metapragmatic that support misogynistic attitudes disguised as opinion. The analyses confirm the study's objectives. It is worth noting the emphasis on

the interactional proximity facilitated by verbal acts and the use of certain emojis, with references to proxemics studies. It is suggested to delve deeper into this aspect, which is crucial to the study's findings and merits further exploration. The writing style is suitable for academic discourse, featuring clear and coherent prose that aligns with the standards expected in a scientific academic article. It is suggested to revisit the opening lines of the first paragraph on page 6 (Regarding the distinct types of interacting, Thompson (2018) contemplates four types and, among them, ensures that online-mediated interaction, the interactional status assumed in this research, encompasses:...). It is suggested to review the appropriateness of using the gerund form of the verb "assume"; it is also suggested to review the wording of the entire statement, as it may imply that Thompson is one of the researchers involved in the proposed work. The bibliography is comprehensive and up-to-date, underscoring the coherence of the study with its subject matter and its contributions to the study of digital discourse, particularly in analyzing social media interactions and addressing misogynistic and violent discourse. Based on the provided feedback, it is considered that the article should be published. ACCEPTED WITH SUGGESTIONS [Revised]

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Reviewed on January 08, 2024.

Review III

The article titled "'*O Feminismo Finalmente Venceu*' [Feminins Finally Won]: Misogynistic and Antifeminist Metapragmatics Disguised as Freedom of Expression," submitted for publication in the Bakhtiniana Journal, aims to analyze "how misogyny establishes itself in an interaction on *X* (formerly *Twitter*) to legitimize hate speech, under the argument of opinion defense." The proposed objective is clearly stated, and the study's progression aligns coherently with its aims. The theoretical framework draws from Interactional Sociolinguistics and Pragmatics, drawing on renowned authors whose research aligns with the objectives of the study (Culpeper, 1996; Silverstein; Urban, 1996; Signorini, 2008). As highlighted in a previous review, the theoretical foundation is current. In addition, the authors demonstrate a thorough understanding of relevant literature while offering original insights that contribute to theoretical advancements in the field. Employing a netnographic method, the methodology, aligned with a qualitative approach, is suitable for the theoretical assumptions underlying the analyses and consistent with the objective of the work. The analyses focus on an interaction on platform *X*, selected based on clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, and are presented clearly, highlighting metapragmatic that support misogynistic attitudes disguised as opinion. The analyses confirm the study's objectives. It is worth noting the emphasis on the interactional proximity facilitated by verbal acts and the use of certain emojis, with references to proxemics studies. In a previous review, there was a suggestion for the authors to further explore theoretical aspects concerning proxemics, an area that receives less attention in Brazil. The authors provided appropriate justification for not addressing this suggestion. It is important to note that this was just a recommendation, as the overall quality of the work was already deemed suitable for publication, as mentioned in both this and the previous review. The writing style is suitable for academic discourse,

featuring clear and coherent prose that aligns with the standards expected in a scientific academic article. The bibliography is similarly current and relevant. It's worth reaffirming that the development of the paper is consistent with the proposed theme, providing contributions to the study of digital discourse, particularly in analyzing social media interactions and addressing misogynistic and violent discourse. Based on the observations provided, it is considered that the article should be published. APPROVED

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