METACOMMUNICATIVE ASPECTS OF IM/POLITENESSIN MID-19TH CENTURY ROMANIAN PRINCIPALITIES

Mihaela-Viorica Constantinescu
Universitatea din Bucureşti
mc_tinescu2000@yahoo.com

Abstract:
The article investigates the im/politeness lexicon in mid-nineteenth century Romanian, based on the analysis of a literary corpus (belonging to the Forty-Eighter writers). The observations try to account for the diachronic variability of im/politeness appraisal in the Romanian Principalities. The results based on the mid-nineteenth century corpus are compared with those of our previous studies on im/politeness in the Romanian princely courts (seventeenth–early eighteenth century chronicles corpus). The article focuses on the relationships between im/politeness and emotion, intentionality, self image, tracing the marks of a politeness continuum.

Keywords:
Politeness, impoliteness, metacommunicative, emotion, intentionality.

1. Theoretical and methodological aspects

The article aims to highlight the relationships between im/politeness and such aspects as emotion, intentionality, self image, tracing the marks of a politeness continuum, in mid-nineteenth century Romanian. The analysis is based on a literary corpus (belonging to the Forty-Eighter writers). Starting from the characters' and the narrator's commentaries regarding in/appropriate interpersonal behaviour, the paper aims to account for the diachronic relativity of the im/politeness evaluations and to reconstruct historically situated practices (Kádár 2014) in the Romanian Principalities. In this study, im/politeness is viewed from the perspective of historical pragmatics (Jucker 1995; Jucker & Taavitsainen 2010; Culpeper & Kádár 2010).

The analysis favours a *first order im/politeness* approach (im/politeness$_1$), thus the interpretation and comments of the participants regarding interaction will be more important than the *second order*, i. e. theoretical, perspective. A first order im/politeness approach is mainly

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)

concerned with the participants' evaluation of behavioural elements. We shall consider what is evaluated by the fictional instances of the texts (characters and narrators) as in/adequate for the interpersonal relationships in a given communicative situation (complying with/violating expectations); we shall also focus on a positive or negative relational management, sometimes triggering positive or negative emotions. 'Politeness' and 'impoliteness' will be used as theoretical classificatory terms in order to account for the discursive phenomena.

Metacommunicative aspects are a matter of reflexive, *metapragmatic awareness* (Verschueren 1999, 2000, 2012). Within the social practice, individuals have different degrees of awareness, depending both on their cognitive abilities and attention to stimuli; one can suggest that awareness is both attentional and intentional. The metacommunicative aspects refer to "reflexive interpretations and evaluations of social actions and meanings", including the participants' use of the im/politeness lexicon (Kádár & Haugh 2013: 186-187). Our way of referring to metacommunicative aspects overlaps with "classificatory" politeness (Eelen 2001) and "metacommunicative expressions" (Taavitsainen & Jucker 2008, Jucker &Taavitsainen 2014). It has been noticed that an "abrupt" or "brutal" transformation of the social practice (to which politeness belongs) leads to "conceptualisations or discourses of politeness that do not resemble at all their previous state" (Kádár & Haugh 2013: 171); thus, the process of changing social norms is a relevant stimulus capturing the individuals' attention and involving salient awareness.

Even if it favours a first order perspective on im/politeness, our approach does not neglect the theoretical perspective. The characters' reasonable choices and personal interest, the dependence of (non) verbal behaviour evaluation on social norms (Culpeper 2011) and on the "sociality rights" (Spencer-Oatey 2007; Culpeper 2011) will be also observed. We have in mind a combination of the uptake (highly important from an im/politeness$_1$ perspective–Locher &Watts 2005; Locher & Watts 2008: 80) with intentionality (as a *post-factum* construct–Culpeper 2011: 49). We shall also observe how the image of the *self* is influenced by the interactional flow and the conversational history (Spencer-Oatey 2007).

The mid-nineteenth century corpus consists of literary texts of some important authors, the so-called 'forty-eighters' (V. Alecsandri, D. Bolintineanu, C. Negruzzi, I. Ghica, M. Kogălniceanu, I. Heliade-

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)

Rădulescu, etc.); these writers closely observe the socio-cultural and language changes. Studying characters' and narrator's evaluations within a literary corpus involves acknowledging the fact that everything is filtered by a more or less aware author, biased in many ways (by his literary, socio-cultural, etc. background). What connects the authors included in the corpus is the fact that they form a generation (they are more or less the same age, they publish in the same literary journals, they have common socio-political goals, they are friends), they could be seen as a network or "discursive community" (Jucker & Kopaczyk 2013). The selected texts are plays, novels, short prose, memoirs, literary correspondence, original writings or adaptations of (usually) French texts, illustrating mainly the romantic literary ideology. The data were manually retrieved, according to the so called 'philological method'. The time frame taken into account is, roughly, 1830-1870.

2. Historical and cultural context

Situated in a region ("neighbourhood") of "competing and never friendly great powers" (Hitchins 2014: 22), the Romanian principalities of Wallachia and Moldaviahad an Eastern political and cultural model, inherited from Byzantium and influenced by the Ottoman Empire. Western influence (mainly French) started since the Phanariot period (1711/1716-1821): Phanariot princes were admirers of the Enlightenment philosophy and of French literature, the young elite was educated by French professors. Yet, the eighteenth century accentuated, for some aristocrats, the orientalism, the way of life was still almost medieval/feudal, in contrast with the dynamic West (Boia 2002). After 1821, a quite rapid and radical opening of the Romanian elite towards the values of western civilization is easily observed (Boia 2002); the elite passionately adopts the western European cultural model, mostly French (Boia 2002, Djuvara 2013). The "active minority" attracts the whole society in the change of the frame of reference (Djuvara 2013). The process of acculturation, which began in eighteenth century, reveals the most rapid and spontaneous westernization in Eastern Europe at the beginning of the following century (Djuvara 2013). The wars against the Ottoman Empire, the peace treaties and diplomacy progressively boosted Russia's position in the principalities, starting with the end of the eighteenth century. Russia was a modernizing agent, along

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)

with the young generation of intellectuals educated in Western Europe (Vintilă-Ghiţulescu 2013: 16).

Starting with the nineteenth century, there is a "Europe" concept in the Romanian thinking. *Europe* means the centre and west of the continent, an urban and industrial modern world, dynamic, highly civilized. Starting with the nineteenth century, we could speak of a (political, administrative, economic, social, cultural and intellectual) "Europeanization" of Romania (Hitchins 2014: 3):

> *No significant aspect of the public and private life of the elite and of those who aspired to join it was left untouched by "Europe"* (Hitchins 2014: 76).

The exterior elements of the cultural model, linguistic and discursive acquisitions included, "define values and symbols, strongly modelling people's life" (Boia 2002, our translation). In less than two generations, the Byzantine and oriental model is replaced by the western one; the western model brings two vital elements in the Romanian society: modernization and national ideology (Boia 2002).

Between the Russian protectorate and the outbreak of the 1848 Revolution, Romanian society was in a state of flux: Ottoman suzerainty *versus* the desire of independence; representative government *versus* Russian interference; Eastern tradition *versus* Western innovation. "Striking contrasts were everywhere manifest – in dress, language, and customs" (Hitchins 2014: 84). The shaping of modern Romania accelerated after the Revolution of 1848 (Hitchins 2014: 76): the union of the principalities is achieved in 1859; a Constitution is adopted in 1866 (the model of this Constitution is the Belgian Constitution of 1830); in May 1866 starts the rule of the foreign prince Carol.

The intellectuals who prepared the revolution, fought in the Revolution of 1848 and who finally saw their wishes come true, were "inspired by a single, all-encompassing goal: to raise the Romanian nation out of its **backwardness** and to bring it into communion with the **modern world**, which, to them, meant Western Europe" (Hitchins 2014: 88, emphasis added). The representatives of this generation of intellectuals were animated by the "spirit of the time", a form of liberalism, which became known as Forty-Eightism (*paşoptism*) and its representatives as forty-eighters (*paşoptişti*). The generation of 1848 had first-hand acquaintance

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)

with Western Europe: the great majority of the representatives of this generation studied in French or German universities, for all of them Paris was "their spiritual second home" (Hitchins 2014: 92). Socially, they represented the upper and middle class, an elite strongly determined to change the Romanian society.

3. The analysis

The observations regarding the nineteenth century corpus will be compared with the results of our previous studies (Constantinescu 2013, forth.) based on the analysis of Romanian chronicles of the mid-seventeenth – early eighteenth centuries.

3. 1. Im/politeness lexicon

Within the context of the princely court, as revealed by the chroniclers, the key lexeme was *cinste* (< Sl. *čĭstĭ*), its' most important meaning being 'honour', but also "consideration, politeness, esteem, respect" (DA). *Cinste* appeared in collocations with *a primi*, *a petrece*, *a merge, a duce, a aduce* (*cu*) ('to receive', 'to accompany', 'to leave', 'to take someone', 'to bring someone (with) '). These forms were accompanied by lexemes indicating ritualised exterior behaviours: *pompă*, *fală*, *alai* ('pomp', 'glory', 'suite'). *Cinste* has also a derivative, the verb *a cinsti*, with either an abstract meaning ('to honour') or a more concrete one ('to offer food and drinks'); sometimes, in the text of the chronicle, it is difficult to make a distinction between these two meanings, as sometimes they seem to overlap.

In the mid-nineteenth century (due mainly to the massive Latin-Romance borrowings), the metacommunicative lexicon of politeness is more diverse: *cinste* is no longer a key lexeme, only the verb *a cinsti* is still used in this sphere. Instead, the nouns that appear quite frequently are: *sevas* (<Ngr. *sévas*) 'respect', *respect* (<Fr. *respect*, Lat. *respectus*) 'respect', *politeţe* (<Fr. *politesse*) 'politeness', *manieră*, *maniere* (<Fr. *manière*) 'manners', *amabilitate* (<Fr. *amabilité*, Lat. *amabilitas, -atis*) 'amiability', *familiaritate* (<Fr. *familiarité*, Lat. *familiaritas*, *-atis*) 'familiarity', *stimă* (<It. *stima*, Fr. *estime*) 'esteem', *tact* (<Fr. *tact*, Germ. *Takt*) 'tact', *graţiozitate* (<Fr. *gracieuseté*, Lat. *gratiositas, -atis*, It. *graziositá*) 'gracefulness', *bunătate* (<*bun*'good') 'kindness', *galantomie* (<*galantom* < cf. Fr. *galant homme*, It. *galantuomo*) 'gallantry', *bun simţ* 'common sense'. The adjectives (sometimes nominalized) are: *politicos* (<Ngr. politikós) 'polite', *respectuos* (< Fr. *respectueux*) 'respectful', *amabil* (< Fr. *aimable*,

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)

Lat. *amabilis*) 'amiable', *afectuos* (< Fr. *affectueux*, Lat. *affectuossus*) 'affectionate', *franc* (<Fr. *franc*) 'frank', *civilizat/ă* (cf. Fr. *civilisé*) 'civilized', *galant* (< Fr. *galant*, It. *galante*) 'gallant', *cumsecade*'decent, honest', *cordial/ă* (< Fr. *cordial*, cf. It. *cordiale*) 'cordial', îndatoritor (<*a se îndatori*) 'obliging'. Besides *a cinsti* (<Sl. *cĭstiti*) 'to honour, to respect', the verbs used are less varied: *a respecta* (<Fr. *respecter*) 'to respect', *a stima* (cf. Fr. *estimer*) 'to esteem', *a onora* (<Lat. *honorare*, Fr. *honorer*, It. *onorare*) 'to honour'. The most frequent adverbs are *politicos* and *respectuos*.

As regards impoliteness, most of the examples from the chronicles are centred on *cinste* (in negative or ironical uses) and its derivative (*necinste*); an interesting class refers to the difference in social ranking (*mojic*, *mojicie* 'boor, boorish/rudeness') and makes reference to inappropriate behaviour. The corpus of the mid-nineteenth century also reveals a variety of terms, the disappearance of *cinste* as a key lexeme and the resistance of the terms associating the low social status with the lack of education (*mojic*, *mojicie* etc.) or improper education, with the lack of openness towards the new rules of social behaviour (a reproach especially addressed by women to men).

The nouns involved in the sphere of impoliteness are: *obrăznicie* (< obraznic) 'rudeness, insolence', batjocură 'ridicule, insult'; *insultă* (< Fr. *insulte*) 'insulte', *insolenţă* (< Fr. *insolence*, lat. *insolentia*) 'insolence', *mojicie* (<*mojic*< Rus. *mužik*, "low social class" and (as a result of this low ranking) "uneducated, uncivil") 'roughness, rudeness', *impertinenţă* (< Fr. *impertinence*) 'impertinence', lack of something polite: *sevas* (<Ngr. sévas) 'respect'; *respect* (<Fr. *respect*, Lat. *respectus*) 'respect'; *delicateţe* (<Fr. *délicatesse*) 'delicacy'. The adjectives (sometimes nominalized) frequently used are: *obraznic* (*obraz-nic*, *obraz* 'cheek') 'insolent, rude', *mojic* 'boor', *modârlan*'rude, boor', *neruşinat* (<*ruşine* 'shame') 'shameless', *grosolan* (< It. *grossolano*) 'rough, rude, gross', *impertinent* (< Fr. *impertinent*, lat. *impertinens, -ntis*) 'impertinent', *fără (de) obraz* (lit. 'with no cheek') 'shameless', *bădăran* (< Hung. *badaró*) 'rude, rough, boor'. Again, the verbs are a smaller category: *a se obrăznici* (refl.) 'to become rude', 'to start behaving in a rude manner', *a insulta* (< Fr. *insulter*, Lat. *insultare*) 'to insult', *a batjocori* 'to ridicule, to insult'. As for the adverbs, *obraznic* 'rudely' is the most frequent.

The choice of words depends on the age of the character or the generation of the author; for instance, the older characters or authors older than most of 1848 generation use more terms of Greek origin: *sevas*,

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)

catigorie (<Ngr. *katigoría*) 'slander', *catahrismie* (<Ngr. *katáhrisis*) 'abuse'. Lexical choice is not only an indicator of the character's age, but also of an attachment to the older social norms.

In what follows, we shall present our observations regarding the metacommunicative aspects revealed by the characters' and narrator's interventions. It should be mentioned that there are similar evaluative lexemes both of verbal and nonverbal (an action, a gesture, etc.) behaviour, related both to the current interaction and to a more general frame (based on interactional history), both *in praesentia* or *in absentia*.

3. 2. Im/politeness appraisal and emotional implications

Im/politeness terms are connected with several affective terms, politeness leading to positive and impoliteness leading to negative emotions. Sometimes, affective terms designate a source of politeness – for example, *gratitude* could be a source of *respect*:

1. Mă închinai pătruns de *recunoştinţă* ... VA P, 578

I bowed full of *gratitude*...

2. *Respectul* lor pentru persoana împăratului Rusiei era izvorât din *recunoştinţă*, căci Rusia pusese capăt domnirii fanarioţilor... VA P, 368

Their *respect* for the emperor of Russia came from *gratitude*, as Russia put an end to the Phanariot rule…

3. În acest palat era rezidenţia de vară a îmbunătăţitei împărătese Mariei, al căria nume *cu sevas* şi *recunoştintă* se răspunde de cii sărimani şi filantropi. GAs II, 339

In this palace there was the summer residence of the kind empress Maria, whose name is pronounced *with respect* and *gratitude* by the poor and by philanthropists.

Gratitude and *respect* are explicitly connected in examples 2 and 3, while in example 1 the gesture of bowing could be connected with respect, but only the affect is expressed.

In some contexts there is a direct connection between *respect/esteem* and *affection, admiration, love, adoration* (durative emotional states), while in some others a momentary state is evoked (*pleasant*):

4. Am petrecut două săptămâni vesele în capitala Besarabiei, unde am găsit cea mai bună priimire şi cea mai *cordială* ospeţie. CN PT, 46

I spent two cheerful weeks in the capital of Bessarabia, where I found the best reception and the most *cordial* hospitability.

5. Contele [Cavour] mă primi cu o *simplitate afectuoasă*, mă puse lângă dânsul pe canapea... VA P, 557

The count [Cavour] welcomed me with *affectionate* ***simplicity***, inviting me to sit next to him on the sofa...

6. Societatea lui era *plăcută*, *manierele* lui ***afectuoase***, convorbirea lui foarte

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)

atrăgătoare... VA P, 457

His company was *pleasant*, his *manners* ***affectionate***, his conversation very appealing...

7. ... nu era nimica sămănând a fudulie, a hauteur, în raporturile dintre boierul cel mare şi omul lui de casă. Acesta era tratat cu o *familiaritate* ***binevoitoare***, adesa chiar *afectuoasă*. RR, 66

... there was nothing like pride, like hauteur, in the relationship between the grand boyar and his protégé. The protégé was treated with *benevolent*, often even ***affectionate***, *familiarity*.

8. prin *manierele* lor ***plăcute***, mă siliră a mă crede în Valahia iarăşi ca într-o ţară civilizată. VA P, 190-191

…by their ***pleasant*** *manners* they determined me to consider myself again in Wallachia like in a civilized country.

9. Alexis o privi [pe verişoara lui călugăriţă] cu o ***respectuoasă*** *admirare* şi crezu că vede un palid serafim... VA P, 505

Alexis looked at her [his cousin, a nun] with ***respectful*** *admiration* and he thought he saw a pale seraphim...

10. …părinţii lui erau fericiţi şi mândri de dânsul, căci el le arăta o *afecţie* ***respectuoasă***... VA P, 496

... his parents were happy and proud of him, as he showed them a ***respectful*** *affection*...

11. Această bătrână păru încântată. Ea *stima* şi ***iubea*** pe Elescu. B, 302

The old lady seemed delighted. She *esteemed* and ***loved*** Elescu.

12. Sfătuirile pline de bunătate care îmi da şi laudele ce îmi prodiga pentru propăşirile ce făceam sub direcţia lui, îmi însuflaseră *atât respect* şi atâta ***iubire*** pentru el, încât ... VA P, 60

His kind pieces of advice and his praising of my artistic progress under his supervision inspired me with *such a respect* and ***love*** for him that…

13. – Te *respect* şi te ***ador***! zise Alexandru... B, 196

- I *respect* you and I ***adore*** you! said Alexandru...

The expression of emotion is not new in this context, it is quite similar to the findings regarding the seventeenth-early eighteenth centuries. There were affective terms: *milă*, *dragoste*, *bucurie*, *blândeţe* (‘charity’, ‘love’, ‘joy’, and ‘kindness’), indicating closeness between the participants; the affectivity was marked within an official hierarchy, when the political-social distance between the participants was small or the direction is from a superior towards an inferior. In the mid-nineteenth century corpus, the affect regards mainly a private relationship: between (future) family members (examples 9, 10, 11), lovers (example 13) or friends (4, 6); there is an affect implied by a public relationship based on socialization (example 8) or on tutoring (example 12). The only official, diplomatic situation where an affective term emerges is illustrated by example 5: the visit of diplomat Alecsandri to prime-minister Cavour. Example 7, marking positive affect in the close relationship between a social superior (the grand boyar) and his

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)

inferior (the protégé), reveals continuity in the Romanian mentality regarding the appropriate relation management. Besides the continuity of expressing positive emotions in interaction (in symmetrical or asymmetrical relationships), revealing a cultural trait of the Romanian society, one cannot disregard the importance of the Romantic literary ideology, predominant during the nineteenth century, ideology which emphasizes affectivity.

The locutor's behaviour triggers an affective response when it is appraised as inappropriate: the locutor could be *upset, vexed, nervous, furious* (transitory affective states) or he/she could express hatred towards the person negatively evaluated (durative affective state):

14. Mariţa: Bătrână! Ce ai zis bătrână? Puşchiule *făr' de obraz*!/ Mă duc, mă duc c-am să leşăn şi ***mă-nnăduş de necaz.*** PND, 363

Mariţa: Old! You called me old? You *shameless* kid! I'm leaving, I'm leaving as I'll faint and ***I'm so angry, I can't breathe***.

15. Elena era ***supărată***: „O asemenea cutezare - îşi zicea ea - este *o insultă*... Ce voi face? (...) " B, 194

Elena was ***upset***: "Such an insolence – she said to herself – is an *insult*... What am I going to do?"

16. Elena scoase un ţipet. „Iată încă un nebun! îşi zise ea după cea dintâi impresiune, dar astă dată este o *impertininţă, o insultă*!" Ea ***se necăjise*** în adevăr... B, 193

Elena let out a cry. "Here's another madman! she said to herself after her first impression, but this time this is an *impertinence, an insult*!" She ***was vexed*** indeed.

17. ... acum uitase ***durerile*** ce-i cauzase *insulta* lui Alexandru. B, 215-216

… now she had forgotten the ***pains*** Alexandru's *insult* had caused her.

18. Dridri, la această *grosolană* aluzie, ***se roşi pe obraz*** şi observă cu ***glas indignat***:... VA P, 417-418

Dridri, hearing this *rude* allusion, ***turned red*** and replied in an ***indignant voice***: …

19. Chiriţa (intrând ***furioasă*** şi făcându-şi vânt cu basmaua): ... VA T1, 399

Chiriţa (entering ***furious*** and fanning her handkerchief): …

20. Tarsiţa [vorbind cu Lipicescu]: (...) Radu-i un *impertinent* ambiţios, ***nesuferit***... îl ***urăsc*** din toată inima... VA T2, 350

Tarsiţa [addressing Lipicescu]: (...) Radu is an ambitious *impertinent*, ***repugnant***... I ***hate*** him with all my heart...

Besides the lexical affective items explicitly framing the emotional response, the emotion could be reconstructed (Plantin 2011) according to the exterior manifestations (turning red, suffocation, the tone of voice, etc.). In the chronicles, the emotional implication of the target or of a third party was marked by lexemes such as *sadness* and *anger*. The emotional lexicon appears to be rather constant, although there is a more evident scale of negative affect (upset, vexed, furious, hatred) in the modern texts, all

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)

illustrating a private setting: *in praesentia* of the recipient (example 14), sometimes in interior monologues (examples 15, 16); in the narratorial interventions (examples 17-19); in the absence of the recipient, the evaluation appears as a confession (example 20). Impoliteness events seem to provoke a negative emotion that could affect the response to the appraised inappropriate input.

3. 3. The politeness continuum

While the key lexeme *cinste* was used with terms conveying an exterior behaviour (*pompă, fală, alai* 'pomp', 'glory', 'suite') or with adjectives implying gradability (*mare, foarte* 'great', 'very'), in the modern texts there are collocations with two apparently synonymous terms: *stimă – respect, a stima – a respecta, a respecta – a cinsti*:

21. Zoiţa: (...) Dar să ştii că eu oi apăra pe serdarul Mândru, pe care îl *respect* şi-l *cinstesc*, şi niciodată nu voi lăsa să-l batjocorească cineva dinaintea mea! PND, 333

Zoiţa: (...) You should know that I shall defend boyar Mândru, whom I *respect* and *honour*, and I'll never allow anyone to insult him in front of me!

22. El începuse *a stima şi respecta* pe Elena... B, 201

He began *to esteem and respect* Elena...

23. Stan: D-ta trebuie *săcinsteşti* şi *să respecţi* pe bărbatul d-tale. PND, 317

Stan: You [pol. pron.] must *honour* and *respect* your [pol. pron.] husband.

In fact, there seems to be a scale, increasing the degree of reverence from *stimă* to *respect* or from *a stima* to *a respecta* and further to *a cinsti/a onora*; at the same time, there is a difference in the interior/exterior manifestation of the participants as regards the recipient (s), the lower degree of reverence is connected with the internal attitude, while the higher degree of reverence is connected with both internal attitude and exteriorization. The verb *a cinsti* does not appear alone (in contrast with the situation in the seventeenth-early eighteenth century chronicles), but collocating with other verbs involved in the scale of deference – one could hypothesize that the meaning 'to honour' was less prominent for lay persons; the more concrete meaning could have been more prominent in the mid-nineteenth century than the abstract one, the collocations with apparent synonyms reinforcing accordingly the abstract interpretation of the verb.

The behaviours that are positively evaluated could be distinguished by some quite subtle traits (Watts's 2003 distinction between *politic* and *polite* behaviour could be useful). *Politeţe* (*politeness*) seems to be connected with distance (in a deferential sense, what Brown and Levinson would label *negative politeness*) in Bolitineanu's novels:

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)

24. Aceste dame îl întâmpinară cu o *politeţă* la care el nu se aştepta. Venirea lui făcu mai multă impresiune asupra postelnicului George, care, îndată ce-l văzu, îl luă în braţe şi îi zise: B, 179

The ladies greeted him with an unexpected *politeness*. His arrival made a more powerful impression on boyar George who, as soon as he saw him, embraced him and said:...

25. Ea nici nu-l întrebă unde a fost, răceala ei umplu inima lui de bănuieli... Salută cu *politeţă* şi trecu înainte. B, 188

She didn't even ask where he had been, her coldness filled his heart with suspicion... he greeted *politely* [lit. with *politeness*] and moved forward.

The above presented situations reveal the evaluation from the perspective of the male character. He (the guest) is surprised by the way he is greeted by persons he used to have a close relation with (the ladies), while the male host expresses joy in receiving him (the boyar's gesture of embracing him could express a positive affect). The contrast in the feminine/masculine characters' reaction could suggest that 'politeness' is linked to a cold-deferent kind of attitude. This idea could be supported by the second example, where an explicit cold attitude of the feminine character triggers a *polite* salute (that again could imply a lack of emotion, thus a cold-deferent attitude). *Politeness* appears as a positively (but cold) marked behaviour.

It seems that *familiaritate* (*familiarity*) represents closeness (*positive politeness* in Brown and Levinson's framework):

26. Elena chemă pe Caterina şi îi prezintă pe Elescu. Cea din urmă răspunde la prezintare cu o *familiaritate* franşă. — Îţi place mult politica? îi zise ea. B, 131

Elena called Caterina and introduced Elescu to her. Caterina responded with a frank *familiarity*. – Are you [sg.] found of politics? she asked him.

Familiarity is another type of positively marked behaviour (cf. Sifianou 1992). *Tact, maniere, bun simţ, respect* (*tact, manners* and *common sense*) seem to convey the adequacy frame of behaviour (i.e., politic behaviour), but their connection with affective terms (see *supra*) determines a shift towards a positively marked behaviour (i.e., polite). Within the realm of positively marked behaviour, one can notice a difference between a "cold-deferent" behaviour (*politeţe*) and the other terms connected with positive affects ("warm" behaviour).

In Alecsandri's memoirs of his diplomatic activity there are some terms reflecting a positively appraised behaviour of a superior; the evaluation (*graţiozitate* 'gracefulness', *bunătate* 'kindness') is made by the

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)

inferior. The narrator assumes his status inferiority and, as a recipient, he positively evaluates the attitude of his superior:

27. Lordul Malmersbury avu *bunătatea* a răspunde că (...) Englitera le va conserva [românilor] *stima* ce merită oamenii practici… VA P, 587

Lord Malmersbury had the *kindness* to answer that England would show them [Romanians] the *esteem* deserved by practical people…

28. Mă închinai *respectuos* şi ieşii din cabinetul împărătesc, încântat şi transportat de *graţiozitatea* cu care Maiestatea Sa mă tratase timp de o oră. VA P, 572

I bowed *respectfully* and went out of the imperial study, ***delighted*** and ***transported*** by the *gracefulness* His Majesty showed me for an hour.

29. – Vă mulţămesc, Mylord, în numele compatrioţilor mei, răspunsei închinându-mă, şi adaug mulţămirile mele personale pentru *bunătatea* cu care m-aţi ascultat şi mai cu samă pentru *graţiozitatea* cu care aţi dat chiar acum titlul de Prinţ colonelului Cuza. VA P, 589-590

– Thank you [pl.], my lord, on behalf of my compatriots, I replied bowing to him, and I add my personal thanks for your *kindness* of listening to me and especially for your [pl.] *gracefulness* of calling colonel Cuza a Prince.

One can hypothesize that a person with an inferior status does not expect a deferent behaviour towards him/her from a superior; thus, when an inferior is treated as an equal by his superior, the type of behaviour is unexpected, being construed as an extra positive mark. The situation could reveal, in the recipient's interpretation, the implications of a Romanian cultural characteristic, with a high distance to power (according to Hofstede's system) in the calculus of what could be appropriate behaviour when an inferior is the recipient.

3. 4. Im/politeness and the self

Even if most of the examples seem to illustrate a focus on the individual self, there are some examples showing a connection with the collective and relational selves:

30. Galantescu: Foarte adevărat, domnul meu, şi te rog a fi gata a-mi da blagoslovenia în loc de tată, căci pe dumneata te *respectez* mai mult decât pe oricare altul. PND, 124

Galantescu: Very true, dear sir [lit. my sir], and please be ready to give me a fatherly blessing, because I *respect* you [pol. pron.] more than anyone else.

31. Cine (...) nu s-au încredinţat de *respectul* tinerilor către bătrâni? VA P, 109/ *respectul* tinerilor pentru bătrâni VA P, 139

Who is not convinced of the young people's*respect* towards the elders? / the young people's*respect* of the elders

As regards the intricate connection between relational and collective selves, example 30 (similar to example 2, *supra*) suggests that the "respect" evaluation applies to a generation or even a people, conveying the

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)

importance of different relationships (child-parent, descendent-ancestor and beneficiary–benefactor) of the speaker with the recipient at the same time.

A highly ranked character could be very sensitive to the lack of expected behaviour, to the ignoring of his higher status or, as a third party, to the ignoring of higher status by an inferior:

32. Neamuş (încet, cătră Vulpe): Văzut-ai aşa *obrăznicie*! *Radu n-au sărutat mâna vărului Iorgu*.

Trufandachi: Lipsa de *sevas*. VA T2, 292

Neamuş (lower voice, to Vulpe): Have you seen such *rudeness*! *Radu did not kiss cousin Iorgu's hand*.

Trufandachi: *Lack of respect*.

The example reveals diverging frames of reference between the old/modern way of social interaction: not kissing a (perceived by others) superior's hand infringes the old sociability rights (to which the characters adhere), but maps the new sociability rights (of Radu, a young man educated in France). The example accounts for the diachronic relativity of 'politeness' (Kádár & Haugh 2013). There is a clash in the reference frames of the old and new generations and a sign of a transition from a strictly hierarchical society to a looser hierarchy within a more democratic setting. In the chronicles, only the relational and collective selves of the target were affected by impoliteness in formal settings, an important role was assigned to status recognition (by birth or political). It seems that status recognition is still important in mid-nineteenth century, especially when the character appraising the behaviour of another interactant belongs to the upper classes.

3. 5. Im/politeness and intentionality

Politeness appears as a *desideratum*; according to the characters' or narrator's interventions, politeness should be targeted (deontic stance) at parents, social superiors, and husbands (both in private and public settings):

33. Evghenidis: Eşti în prezenţa Sfatului, domnule, în prezenţa miniştrilor, şi trebuie să răspunzi *cu respect.* VA T2, 341

Evghenidis: You are [sg.] in the presence of the government, sir, in the presence of ministers, and you [sg.] need to answer *respectfully* [lit. *with respect*].

34. Să fim drepţi şi să ne închinăm *cu respect* şi recunoştinţă dinaintea memoriei părinţilor. Ei prin traiul lor păreau a face parte din secolul XVI, dar au avut meritul sublim de a întroduce în Patria lor un secul de progres şi de regenerare, secolul XIX, adus din străinătate prin copiii lor. VA P, 368

Let's be right and bow with *respect* and gratitude to the memory of our parents. By their way of living, they seemed part of the sixteenth century, but they had the sublime merit of introducing in their country a century of progress and renewal, the nineteenth century, brought by their children from abroad.

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)

35. Anastase: (...) Arghiriţo dragă, ţ-am zis să nu-i răspunzi, ea ţi-este mumă, dacă mi-e mie nevastă, trebuie s-o r*espectezi*, fata mea (...) PND, 188

Anastase: (...) Dear Arghiriţa, I told you not to answer back, she is your mother since she's my wife, you have *to respect* her, my daughter…

Politeness is invoked as a norm when the lack of appropriate behaviour is compensated by action– the character challenges the interlocutor who called him "rude" to a duel:

36. Nicu: Pentru că voiesc să-ţi dau o lecţie de *politeţă.* VA T2, 269

Nicu: Because I want to teach you a *politeness* lesson.

Although it is not always evident that there is an offending intention, the uptake indicates that there is a perceived/attributed intention (maybe with one/two exception (s), when the interlocutor laughs while negatively evaluating the locutor). The impolite intervention could be a reaction to a previous remark perceived as offensive:

37. - Cel puţin eu îţi mărturisesc, cucoana mea, zise acest domn ***ofensat***, că nici eu nu am văzut pe vreo damă puind o grădină cu flori pe cap, ca dumneata. Mă iartă, dar parcă eşti o bre...

- Ah! ce *obrăznicie*! strigă doamna Bîlcioaia făcându-se că leşină. PRR, 232

- At least I confess, my lady, said the ***offended*** gentleman, that I have never seen a lady putting a garden of flowers on top of her head like you [pol. pron.] did. Forgive-me, but you seem to be...

- Ah! Such *rudeness*! cried madam Bîlcioaia while pretending to faint.

The lady criticized the way the gentleman was dressed: this event, perceived as negative (see the adjective *ofensat* 'offended' in the narratorial intervention), leads to a critique of the way the lady arranged her hat, and this intervention triggers the explicit negative appraisal.

Regarding intentionality in the chronicles, similar to the findings in the modern corpus, most of the examples reveal an uptake of the verbal and nonverbal behaviour as offensive and intentional. The "aggressor" is sometimes unaware of the effect of his/her behaviour, while in other situations there is an intention to offend and an associated uptake (Constantinescu ms.).

The following examples reflect a negatively evaluated behaviour but without a negative effect (maybe without a real uptake):

38. Marghioliţa (dinîntru): Fugi, *obraznicule*, că m-ai spăriet [o speriase sărutându-i umărul] (...) Ha, ha, ha ! cât îi de *obraznic*!VA T1, 297

Marghioliţa (from her room): Go away, *you rude*, you have frightened me [he surprised her by kissing her shoulder] (...) Ha, ha, ha! he is so *rude*!

39. – Eşti u*n impertinent*! zise principesa râzând; dar îţi iert pentru că ai fost profet... S-a dus la băi... B, 206

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)

- You are an *impertinent*! said the princess laughing; but I forgive you since you've guessed [lit. you've been a prophet]... he went to the baths.

As most of the examples are from plays, there is a less evident author's control. Nevertheless, the playwright's intervention is present, indicating the way the readers should interpret a line:

40. Arbore: Dacă mă ştii, ce mă mai întrebi de nume?... Ai prins orbul găinilor?

Lipicescu (*obraznic*): Ei!... ş-apoi?... VA T2, 287

Arbore: If you know me, why do you keep asking for my name?... Have you become blind?

Lipicescu (*rude*): Well, so what?...

41. Stâlpeanu: (...) (întorcându-se către Lipicescu) Cât pentru tine, ciocoiule, acu să ieşi din casa vărului Iorgu şi să nu te mai arăţi pe-aici... ieşi!

Lipicescu (*obraznic*): Nu priimesc poronci de la dumneta. VA T2, 356-357

Stâlpeanu: (...) (turning to Lipicescu) As for you, upstart, get out of cousin Iorgu's house right now and don't you ever come again... get out!

Lipicescu (*rude*): I'm not taking orders from you [pol. pron.].

4. Concluding remarks

In our corpus, the comments on polite behaviour are more frequent in the narratorial sphere than in the characters' domain. Maybe polite behaviour is not as salient as impolite behaviour, or its adequacy does not trigger an explicit appraisal. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see that there are situations when the speaker evaluates his/her own behaviour as complying with the norms or expectations (self-monitoring, examples 12, 13, 21, 31).

For the Romanian society of the mid-nineteenth century Hofstede's parameters would be: collectivism, high distance to power, and lower distance in the social relationship. The collectivism parameter is connected to the closeness and affectivity between participants in interaction; politeness is not only face-enhancing, but also face-constituting (it is a part of identity construction), even though less salient than impoliteness (there are more politeness evaluations in the narratorial discourse).

In the formal setting of the feudal court, it was (quasi) obligatory to show deference or closeness through exterior manifestations, as politeness was a ritualised behaviour; the ritualised behaviour was doubled by stereotypical lexical means of appraisal. The mid-nineteenth century reveals a wide variety of private and public relationships, as well as the importance of socialization; the exterior manifestations are a norm in certain settings (for example, diplomacy) and the calculus of appropriateness differs from

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)

one frame of reference (the old) to another (the modern). The politeness lexicon is rich and seems to distinguish between different types of appropriate and positively marked behaviour. Many instances of metapragmatic comments arise as a result of the very salient awareness of a brutal change of the reference frame in a given context.

Acknowledgement

This paper is supported by the Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development (SOP HRD), financed from the European Social Fund and by the Romanian Government under the contract number SOP HRD/159/1. 5/S/136077.

Corpus

VA P – ALECSANDRI, Vasile *Opere*, vol. IV *Proză*, text ales şi stabilit, note şi variante de Georgeta Rădulescu-Dulgheru, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1974.

VA T1 – ALECSANDRI, Vasile, *Opere*, V, *Teatru*. Text ales şi stabilit, note şi comentarii de Georgeta Rădulescu-Dulgheru. Bucureşti: Minerva, 1977.

VA T2 – ALECSANDRI, Vasile, *Opere*, VI, *Teatru*. Text ales şi stabilit, note şi comentarii de Georgeta Rădulescu-Dulgheru. Bucureşti: Minerva, 1979.

Gas II – ASACHI, Gheorghe, *Opere*, vol. II, ediţie critică şi prefaţă de N. A. Ursu, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1981

B – BOLINTINEANU, Dimitrie, *Opere*, vol. V, ediţie îngrijită, note şi comentarii de Teodor Vârgolici, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1984.

CN PT – NEGRUZZI, C., *Opere*, vol. 1. *Păcatele tinereţelor*, ediţie critică, cu studiu introductiv, comentarii şi variante de Liviu Leonte, Bucureşti: Minerva, 1974.

PRR – *Pionierii romanului românesc*, antologie, text stabilit, note şi prefaţă de Şt. Cazimir, București: Editura pentru literatură, 1962.

PND – *Primii noștri dramaturgi*, ediție îngrijită și glosar de Al. Niculescu; antologie, studiu introductiv și note bibliografice de Florin Tornea, București: Editura de stat pentru literatură și artă, 1960.

RR – ROSETTI, Radu, *Amintiri. Ce am auzit de la alţii*. *Din copilărie. Din prima tinereţe*, Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2013.

References

BOIA, Lucian, 2002, *România: ţară de frontieră a Europei*. Bucureşti: Humanitas.

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)

BROWN, Penelope, LEVINSON, Stephen C., 1987, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CONSTANTINESCU, Mihaela-Viorica, 2013, „Forme şi strategii ale politeții la cronicari" in R. Zafiu et al. (eds.): *Limba română: variaţie sincronică, variaţie diacronică*, vol. II., Bucureşti: Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, p. 53-66.

CONSTANTINESCU, Mihaela-Viorica, forth, „Observaţii asupra mărcilor comportamentale ale politeții la cronicari (sec. XVII-XVIII) " in *Actele celui de-al V-lea Simpozion Internaţional de Lingvistică*.

CONSTANTINESCU, Mihaela-Viorica, ms, "Impoliteness in the Romanian Court Life (seventeenth-eighteenth centuries) ", submitted for the Intercultural Pragmatics Conference (2014) Proceedings volume.

CULPEPER, Jonathan, 2011, *Impoliteness. Using Language to Cause Offence.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CULPEPER, Jonathan, KÁDÁR, Dániel Z. (eds.), 2010, *Historical (Im) politeness*. Bern/Berlin etc.: Peter Lang.

DJUVARA, N., 2013, *Între Orient şi Occident. Ţările române la începutul epocii moderne (1800–1848)*, second edition, Bucureşti: Humanitas.

EELEN, Gino, 2001, *A Critique of Politeness Theories*, Manchester: St Jerome Publishing.

HITCHINS, Keith, 2014, *A Concise History of Romania*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

HOFSTEDE, Geert, 2001, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

JUCKER, Andreas H. (ed.), 1995, *Historical Pragmatics. Pragmatic Developments in the History of English*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

JUCKER, Andreas H., KOPACKYK, Joanna, 2013, "Communities of practice as a locus of language change" in J. Kopaczyk, A. H. Jucker (eds.): *Communities of Practice in the History of English*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, p. 1-16.

JUCKER, Andreas H., TAAVITSAINEN, Irma (eds.), 2010, *Historical Pragmatics*, Berlin/New York: De Gruyter.

JUCKER, Andreas H., TAAVITSAINEN, Irma, 2014, "Complimenting in the History of American English. A Metacommunicative Expression Analysis" in I. Taavitsainen, A. H. Jucker, J. Tuominen (eds.):

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)

Diachronic Corpus Pragmatics, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, p. 257–276.

KÁDÁR, Dániel Z., 2014, "Historical Politeness" in *Handbook of Pragmatics Online*, https://benjamins.com/online/hop/ (consulted in January 2015).

KÁDÁR, Dániel Z., HAUGH, Michael, 2013, *Understanding Politeness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

LOCHER, Miriam, WATTS, Richard J., 2005, "Politeness Theory and Relational Work", *Journal of Politeness Research* 1 (1): 9-33.

LOCHER, Miriam, WATTS, Richard J., 2008, "Relational Work and Impoliteness: Negotiating Norms of Linguistic Behaviour" in D. Bousfield and M. Locher (eds.): *Impoliteness in Language. Studies on its Interplay with Power in Theory and Practice*, Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, p. 77-99.

PLANTIN, Christian, 2011, *Les bonnes raisons des émotions. Principes et méthode pour l'étude du discours émotionné*, Berne: Peter Lang.

SIFIANOU, Maria, 1992, *Politeness Phenomena in England and Greece. A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, Oxford: Claredon Press.

SPENCER-OATEY, Helen, 2007, "Theories of Identity and the Analysis of Face" in: *Journal of Pragmatics* 39: 639-656.

TAAVITSAINEN, Irma, JUCKER, Andreas H., 2008, "'Methinks you seem more beautiful than ever': Compliments and Gender in the History of English" in A. H. Jucker, I. Taavitsainen (eds.): *Speech acts in the history of English*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, p. 195-228.

VERSCHUEREN, Jef, 1999, *Understanding Pragmatics*, London: Arnold.

VERSCHUEREN, Jef, 2000, "Notes on the Role of Metapragmatic Awareness in Language Use" in *Pragmatics* 10:4, 439-456.

VERSCHUEREN, Jef, 2012, "The Metapragmatics of Civilized Belligerence" in U. Busse, A. Hubler (eds.): *Investigations into the Meta-Communicative Lexicon of English. A Contribution to Historical Pragmatics*, Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins, p. 111-128.

VINTILĂ-GHIȚULESCU, Constanţa, 2013, *Evgheniţi, ciocoi, mojici. Despre obrazele primei modernităţi româneşti 1750-1860*, Bucureşti: Humanitas.

WATTS, Richard, 2003, *Politeness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

BDD-A17644 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:55:32 UTC)