

Heckling — A mimetic-interpersonal perspective*

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The present paper aims to model the interactional operation of heckling, which has received little attention in impoliteness and interaction studies, despite the fact that studying this phenomenon has various advantages for the analyst. In order to fill this knowledge gap, I approach heckling by combining Turner's (1982) anthropological framework with my interaction-based relational ritual theory (e.g. Kádár 2012, 2013; Kádár and Bax 2013). Following Turner, I define heckling as a 'social drama', which is evaluated by its watchers as 'judges'. In accordance with my relational ritual framework I argue that heckling is a mimetic ritualistic mini-performance, which is inherently interactional as it operates in the adjacent action pair of the heckler's performance and the public speaker/performer's counter-performance. Adopting Turner's terminology, heckling is a ritualistic performance of 'anti-structure', i.e. it upsets the regular social — and consequently interactional — structure of a setting. Successful counter-performance is a ritual of 'structure', which restores the normal social structure of the event, as the public speaker/performer regains control over the interaction. Through the social actions of performance and counter-performance the heckled and the heckler aim to affiliate themselves with the audience, who are 'metaparticipants' of the ritualistic interaction, and with the watchers/listeners in the case of video/audio-recorded interactions, who can be defined as 'lay observers' (cf. Kádár and Haugh 2013). Approaching heckling as a theatrical type of relational ritual helps us capture various complexities of this phenomenon, such as its relationship

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with certain interactional settings and metaparticipant expectations/evaluations, and its interface with related phenomena such as impoliteness.

Keywords: heckling; ritual; (dis)affiliation; interruption; disruption; aggression

1. Introduction

The present paper aims to model the interactional operation of heckling — a form of aggressive behaviour by means of which a person or group of persons interrupt a person who speaks or performs on stage, in order “to harass and try to disconcert [him or her] with questions, challenges, or gibes”.² This interruption, by means of which a metaparticipant audience member (see below) attempts to become an ‘unratified’ participant (Goffman 1967), is a noteworthy phenomenon from the perspective of interaction and aggression studies because it inherently evokes conflict, as the unratified/unexpected interruption³ of someone’s public speech/performance upsets what Goffman (1967) defines as the ‘interactional order’.

The phenomenon of heckling has been examined in various areas of interaction studies, including for example conversation analysis (e.g. McIlvenny 1996), pragmatics (Rao 2011; Stopfner 2013), rhetoric (e.g. Jacobs 1982; Jacobs and Jackson 1993), gender and language (e.g. Baxter 2002), interaction and social psychology (e.g. Silverthorne and Mazmanian 1975; Bull and Fetzer 2010), as well as in other disciplines such as psychology and cognitive research (e.g. Ware and Tucker 1974), arts (e.g. Zeman 1987; Jordan 2011) and law (e.g. Korey Lefteroff 2005). It is thus surprising that heckling has received relatively little attention in recent research on linguistic impoliteness (e.g. Bousfield 2008; Culpeper 2011), despite the fact that studying this phenomenon has various advantages for the analyst (e.g. many video-recorded cases of heckling are available online). The reason for this lack might be the ambiguous relationship between heckling and impoliteness (see Section 4).

Thus, whilst due to previous interaction studies we have substantial knowledge about the linguistic techniques of heckling and countering the heckler, we know much less about the interpersonal dynamics of this phenomenon. This knowledge

2. See Merriam-Webster Online dictionary (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heckle>).

3. Note that there is ratified interruption as well, e.g. when a speaker proposes to the audience to stop him if something is unclear. Also note that the un/ratifiedness of heckling is relative to context, considering that heckling can be normative from certain perspectives and in certain contexts (see Section 4).

gap manifests itself in somewhat ambiguous definitions of heckling; for example, McIlvenny's (1996: 25) paper, which is otherwise a most thought-provoking conversation analytic account on heckles, notes that:

a heckle is an individual, public utterance usually directed at a ratified current speaker, often in response to a particular assertion, utterance, statement, or speech.

This definition is vague because heckling is not necessarily an individual act⁴ (e.g. there can be a group of hecklers⁵), and also it does not necessarily occur "in response to a particular assertion" (see Section 3.3). Also, is heckling always a "public utterance [my emphasis]"? If so, what is the situation with written heckling — which plays a key role in certain interactional settings (see Section 3.2)?

In order to model heckling from an interpersonal perspective and fill in this knowledge gap, I approach this phenomenon by combining Victor Turner's (1982) anthropological framework⁶ with my interaction-based relational ritual theory, elaborated in some previous work (e.g. Kádár 2012, 2013; Kádár and Bax 2013). My ritual framework approaches ritual as a schematic/conventionalised verbal and non-verbal performance, which is (potentially) interactionally (co-)constructed and which has a complex impact on interpersonal relationships. Following Turner (1982), I define heckling as a 'social drama', which is evaluated by its watchers as 'judges'. In the centre of this social drama is the heckled person, who has an institutionalised right to speak or perform on stage, and potentially the heckler, who can acquire a voice through interrupting the public speaker/performer. In accordance with my ritual theory, I argue that heckling is an interactionally (co-)constructed mimetic ritual, that is, it (re-)enacts certain social or interpersonal values vis-à-vis a performance oriented towards the public. This performance action is inherently interactional as it operates in the adjacent action pair of the heckler's performance and the public speaker/performer's counter-performance (which may also include

4. Whilst I mostly use the label 'act' in reference to heckling, one could rightly argue that it is a genre practice; I am grateful to Pilar Blitvich for drawing my attention to this point.

5. As Jacobs and Jackson (1993: 145) note, "[t]he most common form of heckling comes in the form of crowd responses: of laughter, whistling, applause, howling, and hooting." Although it seems to be difficult to claim that there is a "most common form" of heckling, I definitely agree that heckling can take place as a group activity. In the present paper, due to my focus on interaction, I cite individual cases; however, based on the data studied (see Section 1.1) I argue that the model of the public speaker's behaviour (and expectancies towards their behaviour) as presented here is also valid to cases in which a public speaker/performer faces a group of hecklers.

6. See also Turner (1969).

'passive' behaviour, when non-action counts as action; see extract 6).⁷ Adjacency is not a rule, and anti-performance may not take place, but such a lack of ritualistic response potentially implies the public speaker/performer 'cowardice', or at least lack of professionalism, in certain interactional settings (see Section 3.1).⁸ Thus, the term 'heckling', when it is used in a general sense in this paper, collectively describes action and counter-action. Adopting Turner's terminology, heckling is a ritualistic performance of 'anti-structure' (i.e. it upsets the regular social — and consequently interactional — structure of a setting), and it implies "liberation from constraints"⁹ (Turner 1982:44) for the heckler and those who are affiliated with him. Successful counter-performance is a ritual of 'structure', which restores the normal social structure of the event, as the public speaker/performer regains control over the interaction. Through the social actions of performance and counter-performance, the heckled and the heckler aim to affiliate (Stivers 2008) themselves with the audience, who are 'metaparticipants' of the ritualistic interaction, and with the watchers/listeners in the case of video/audio-recorded interactions, who can be defined (unlike audience members) have no possibility to actively participate in the event who can be defined as metaparticipants who (unlike audience members) have no possibility to actively participate in the event (see Kádár and Haugh 2013; see more in Section 4).¹⁰

Approaching heckling as a theatrical type of relational ritual — and this definition reflects the above-discussed theoretical rather than popular understanding (see also Section 2) — helps us capture various complexities of this phenomenon, such as its relationship with certain interactional settings and metaparticipant expectations/evaluations. The interpretation of heckling as a relational ritual also helps us de-

7. Note that whilst I borrow the term 'adjacent' from conversation analysis (e.g. Schegloff 1999), I use it in an unconventional way to describe action pairs (potentially beyond the boundaries of language).

8. The lack of counter-performance can also signal superiority from the audience's perspective, but only if the public speaker/performer makes it clear to the audience that he intentionally ignores the heckler, hence belittling him. I refer to such cases as acting in a *seemingly* passive way, see extract (3).

9. As Turner (1982) argues — and I definitely agree with this view — ritual liberation from constraints can resolve real crises but it can also serve as a way to 'let off steam'. Indeed, the anti-structural ritual performance of heckling can operate as a way to resolve crises (e.g. opposing a politician) and also as a sort of outlet for people's energy (e.g. in the case of sport matches). Thus, following Turner (1982: 28), one can argue that in heckling, disorder "gets its *raison d'être*".

10. Note that affiliating with metaparticipants and lay observers is the primary goal of such interactions, and this primary goal does not exclude the heckler's or the public speaker/performer's attempts to affiliate with each other. In my data there are various cases which can be interpreted as public speaker/performer or heckler attempts to normalise the relationship with each other. Also note that the group of metaparticipants is potentially diverse.

fine its place within the interface of ‘interactional’ (co-constructed) language use¹¹ and ‘scripted’ on-stage interaction such as traditional theatrical performance and certain forms of public speech, by positioning heckling as an interactionally (co-) constructed ritualistic performance which can even cooperate with ‘proper’ performance (see Section 3.3). Turner (1982:33) draws a distinction between on-stage theatre and other forms of social drama resolved by rituals, by claiming that “theatre is about rationalising social drama”. This implies that traditional theatre, unlike ritual (as understood by Turner) is ‘liminoid’ and not ‘liminal’, i.e. it brings its watchers into an altered social and psychological state in an ‘artistically constructed’ way; consequently, watchers of liminoid phenomena like theatre can only ever be metaparticipants.¹² Liminal phenomena like the relational ritual of heckling, on the other hand, involve the audience as metaparticipants (see Section 3), *and* occasionally as participants (see e.g. extract 8), as they trigger participation and bring their participants into an altered social and psychological state (on the psychological effect of ritual, see Kienpointner 1997:262; and Koster 2003:219).¹³

This paper consists of the following parts. Section 2 illustrates the rationale behind the present definition of heckling, by arguing that we need to distinguish between theoretical and popular usages of this term (but theoretical usages should be enriched by popular ones). Section 3.1 models the interactional operation of heckling, by determining two major types of heckle and their relationship with the two general interactional settings¹⁴ in which heckling can take place, as well as the expectations triggered by these settings. Heckling is an ad hoc type of ritual (see Bax 2010), and my aim is not to ‘systemise’ it but rather to reveal its interpersonal dynamics in terms of interactional tendencies. Sections 3.2 and 3.3 illustrate the interactional operation of heckling in various scenarios. Finally, Section 4 integrates heckling into research on relational phenomena, by examining its relationship with impoliteness and integrating it into relational ritual theory (see Kádár 2013) vis-à-vis different understandings of this phenomenon (Kádár and Haugh 2013).

For the sake of simplicity, in this paper I use an acronym PSP for ‘public speaker/performer’. As Section 3.1 explains, in certain settings such as sport events the

11. As Kádár and Haugh (2013) argue, ‘interactional’ is a broad category, and here I use this term to collectively describe any piece of conversation which is co-constructed by the interactants.

12. This, of course, can change if the liminoid event becomes liminal, e.g. through heckling. I am thankful to Sian Robinson Davies for drawing my attention to this point.

13. Of course, heckling can also be liminoid if it is ‘scripted’, see Section 4. Note that the term ‘theatre’ refers here to traditional theatre and it does not involve alternative theatre (Bond 2013), neither does it involve interactive theatrical genres in which heckling is relatively common such as stand-up comedy (see Miles 2013, and example 3).

14. The term ‘setting’ also includes interactional practices occasioned by a given setting.

heckled person does not verbally perform, and so PSP covers both verbal and non-verbal performers. Also, I use the masculine 'he' when referring to the heckler/PSP as the default.

1.1 Methodology and data

I examine both the macro-level contextual and micro-level linguistic features (see Thornborrow 2002) of heckling. Also, in accordance with the ritual framework adopted, I aim to capture heckling beyond the level of language use, as a ritualistic social action (see Kádár 2013). This analytic approach is needed because in certain cases, performance or counter-performance within the action pair of heckling operates beyond the level of language (see Section 3). Thus, I also analyse various non-linguistic aspects of the interactions studied, such as facial expressions and body language, and their interrelation with utterances, according to Goodwin's (1986) claim that body language and gestures are 'socially organised actions'. I believe that examining social actions such as heckling beyond language, in a somewhat similar way to linguistic anthropology (see amongst others Hymes 1983), helps us to bring (linguistic) interaction research closer to other disciplines, such as performing arts.

The present research is based on a dataset of 112 video-recorded interactions in English and Hungarian, retrieved from video-sharing websites such as YouTube. Along with video-recorded interactions I also examined 37 anecdotal cases of heckling, including 2 interactions which I encountered in person. Most of the interactions I analysed occurred in the following four settings:

- Political speeches
- Sport events
- Public talks
- Stand-up comedies

I do not describe/categorise heckling according to these generic contexts, although of course different genres tend to trigger somewhat different forms of PSP and heckler behaviour. This is because, as Section 3 illustrates, there is a more in-depth categorisation by means of which one can capture the interpersonal operation of heckling. Also, I believe that it is unhelpful to attempt to categorise the heckling phenomenon according to genre types (Steen 1999), which might be too diverse for a single study to overview. Furthermore, certain genre types such as public political talks are 'elusive', in the sense that their constraints and affordances for the heckler and the PSP may depend on different factors such as audience size, physical space and so on.

The analysis presented in this paper is predominantly qualitative. Nevertheless, I will make use of a simple quantitative analysis in Section 3.1, when I examine the time length of focus which video-recorded interactions devote to the heckler and the PSP, but I do this only to support claims made on the basis of the qualitative analysis.

Within the 112 video-recorded interactions, 67 represent what I define in Section 3.1 as “interactional–elevated” settings, and the remaining 45 represent what I define as “presentational–exposed” settings.

2. Understanding ‘heckling’

As argued in Kádár (2013: 11),

[r]itual can be approached from various angles, including, most importantly, from the perspective of interactional definition of participants themselves, or from a theoretical perspective, i.e. by rationalising the interactional meaning and function of relational ritual. The former perspective is often referred to as the so-called ‘first-order perspective’ and the latter one as the ‘second-order perspective’.

Heckling, perhaps even more than many other types of ritualistic performance, has various different popular understandings and evaluations due to its controversial nature. Precisely because of this, it is reasonable to elaborate a second-order concept of this phenomenon that is broad enough, and which can consequently accommodate a wide range of (first-order) understandings and evaluations.

The complexity of defining heckling is reflected even by some scholarly discussions on the heckler’s person. For example, Fiss (1986) argues that the heckler “is an obstructionist, who is not so much conveying an idea as preventing someone else from doing so”. Jordan (2011: 118), on the other hand, refers to the heckler as follows:

Let’s upend the conformist definition of the heckle as anti-social and instead think of the heckler as heroic, a kind of public speech super hero, with the ability to suspend rhetoric, preserving the right to speak out of turn. The violence, awkwardness and embarrassment of the heckle are signs of its political courage, fearlessness and agency. The heckler’s interruption opens up a space for public discourse. Deprived of the heckler we would have one less method of turning passers-by into assembled publics.

Such differences seem to reflect different worldviews: Fiss’s description seems to reflect the perspective of those who are interested in the maintenance of order,

whilst Jordan's description shows her Neo-Marxist stance.¹⁵ Some other scholars describe heckling from the utilitarian perspective of their disciplines. For example, lawyer Mikhaylova (2011: 42) describes the heckler as "an audience member who attempts to mess with a comedian's act", whilst education expert Ingram (1941: 1190) notes that in terms of classroom roles the heckler "is a very useful person who reinforces your good arguments and shoots holes in your poor ones, by backing you against the wall of fact."

It is pertinent to note that understandings of 'heckling' are also diachronically relative. For example, associating the heckler's action with potential heroism and democracy — and the spread of the word 'heckling' and variants such as 'barrack-ing' — is a post-industrial development (Chapman 1948);¹⁶ however, other forms of heckling have arguably existed in the context of entertainment since ancient times. For example, Smith (2006) notes in an online article on ancient Rome, that the verb *explodere* was used in the context of entertainment, to describe the actions of 'driving out by clapping', and 'hissing (a player) off the stage'. Another thought-provoking example of heckling in antiquity, in the context of political discourse, can be found in a passage in Cicero's letters to Atticus (I.16.1), where Cicero reports an episode of heckling in the Roman senate. That is, on May 15, 61 B.C. Claudius insulted Cicero *ad hominem* during his talk, and this heckle culminated in a verbal fight, which ended with Cicero managing to silence Claudius (at least, as Cicero claims).¹⁷ In fact, claiming an absolute relationship between democracy and heckling is problematic also because, in some cultures, lexical equivalents of 'heckling' relate to the context of entertainment. As an example we may refer to the

15. I am grateful to Mel Jordan for pointing this out for me. Note that Neo-Marxist works in general (e.g. Bruff 2013) tend to represent heckling as an essentially positive phenomenon. The Neo-Marxist approach to heckling, along with its evaluative nature, seems to me to be problematic because it categorises heckling as a politically-loaded act, hence ignoring some of those occurrences of this phenomenon which are unrelated to politics (see e.g. example 6). As regards this latter point, it is necessary to note that I interpret political heckling as a heckling type that occurs in the context of "the governance of a country or area" (Oxford English Dictionary; accessed on 15.11.2013); this definition differs from the broader interpretation of politics by the above-mentioned Neo-Marxist scholars who see politics as an activity of power distribution, which exists in any relational network.

16. Whilst this topic is beyond the scope of this paper, political heckling seems to be a phenomenon with roots in Western-style democracies and that are perceived (by Westerners, often in a somewhat patronising manner) as 'less/non-democratic' than their Western counterparts. See an interesting discussion in Chinese in the following website: <http://www.chinese.rfi.fr/print/128730?print=now>.

17. I am grateful to one of my anonymous referees for sharing this interesting case with me.

historical Japanese expression¹⁸ *hanjou wo uchi komu* 半畳を打ち込む, which literally describes a Japanese manifestation of heckling, namely ‘throwing in a tatami mat, which people sat on in theatres, onto the stage’.

In the present, second-order model the identities of heckler and PSP are approached as interactionally (co-)constructed and ritual roles in social drama (see Section 1); the interactional behaviour the metaparticipants (watchers/listeners) expect in these roles correlates with the different setting types of the drama. The interactants supposedly construct roles on the basis of (a) (micro)cultural schema (see Alexander 2004), and (b) anticipations of expectation (see more in Section 3); due to this, ‘role playing’ in the context of social drama allows (and actually encourages) ad hoc individuality and creativity. Approaching heckling in this way not only helps the analyst to refrain from moral judgments about the heckler’s person (although such evaluations can be studied when they are made within the data), but also helps in capturing different manifestations of heckling — spanning ancient Japanese acts of throwing tatami mats on the stage, to modern booing in political contexts — within a single framework. But what are the setting types, or stages, of the social drama of heckling? In what follows, let us focus on this question.

3. A model of heckling behaviour

3.1 Settings of heckling

One should avoid drawing equality between the PSP’s and the heckler’s ritualistic performances, which essentially differ from each other in scope due to both institutional roles and situational realities. As to the latter, it is necessary to distinguish between two fundamentally different settings in which heckling takes place, namely *interactional* and *presentational* settings, which provide different interactional affordances and constraints for the PSP and the heckler. I will explain these notions in the next paragraphs; in brief, ‘interactional’ describes situations in which the PSP has the opportunity to directly interact with the heckler and the audience, whilst ‘presentational’ refers to settings in which the PSP acts as a presenter without the possibility to directly react. The following simple examples illustrate the operation of heckling in interactional and presentational settings:

18. This expression occurred first in an 18th century text; see: <http://kobun.weblio.jp/content/半畳を打ち込む>.

(1)

EC = Eliot Chang (American Asian comedian)

H = heckler

AUD = audience

EC: 1. I was in DC

H: 2. Huuuu (screams)EC: raises his fist as a mock gesture of support,
then smilesEC: 3. (1.0) Truth! All right ...

AUD: 4. ((laughter))

[...]

EC: 5. No, I'm saying she [i.e. the heckler] is a singer! Oh f***

EC: grasps the microphone and
mockingly imitates the heckler
who in the manner of a 'singer'
interrupted him with screams

AUD: 6. ((laughter))

H: 7. My baby is a singer!

(Retrieved from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXJgmCsZQsM>)

(2)

CR = Colby Rasmus (US professional baseball center fielder)

H = heckler

AUD = audience

H: 1. Get a haircut, hippie!

AUD: 2. ((laughter))

CR: 3. ((does not visibly react))

(Retrieved from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPm6WwE5vVg>)

Extract (1) is drawn from a stand-up comedy performance: a woman from the audience heckles comedian Eliot Chang several times, first by interrupting him as she screams in a high-pitched voice, and then through a verbal exchange. This interactional situation (see below) allows Chang to respond to the challenge, and he handles the situation successfully: e.g. in turn 3 he mocks the heckler vis-à-vis an ostensible (and so clearly a fake) act of agreement. In contrast to (1), the presentational setting of extract (2) makes it difficult for the PSP to respond to the heckler. This extract represents a heckling event when a heckler mocks Colby Rasmus, a baseball who is known for having a long hair, by shouting "Get a haircut, hippie!"

More specifically: in interactional settings, such as public speeches and stand-up comedy, the PSP is in a physically *elevated* position and he has the institutional right not only to deliver a presentation but also to directly *interact with the audience*; this interactive relationship can be perhaps most clearly seen in the above-discussed case of those stand-up comedies, which encourage active audience participation (see Rutter 2000) and in which verbal interaction is thus clearly bidirectional. In interactional settings, the heckler may prepare for the act of heckling; however, meta-discussion on heckling suggests that heckling can as well be spontaneous; I have encountered various cases in which the heckler claims that

he suddenly felt, while listening to a public speech, that interrupting the PSP was a *moral obligation*.¹⁹ In this setting, the pretext for interruption often seems to be provided in my data by an emergent utterance from the PSP. Thus, the heckler has a limited opportunity to put on a complex performance, whilst the PSP's counter-performance tends to be relatively complex — even though, through the metaparticipants' positive attitude and encouragement, simple forms of disruption may grow beyond their seeming importance.

Presentational settings, such as the above-cited case of sport events, as well as certain types of onstage performance, afford a fundamentally different interactional dynamics for the participants. In such settings, the PSP is not elevated but rather *exposed*; being 'exposed' implies that while the PSP may be in an elevated spot, he does not have an institutional right to directly interact with the audience — although there are indirect means for the PSP to counter a heckler (see below and Section 3.3).²⁰ This setting allows heckling to become a more elaborate performance because the heckler can not only prepare for the act of disruption but can also make use of the PSP's exposed condition. Importantly, it is possible to transform presentational settings into interactional ones, if a PSP who is institutionally not supposed to directly interact with the heckler decides to temporarily deviate from the setting's norms and go 'off script', and makes this decision clear to metaparticipants (see extract 4). As a matter of course, the PSP can also simply attempt to break with the norms of the exposed setting, but this is a dangerous move as extract (7) illustrates.

Interactional-elevated and presentational-exposed settings tend to trigger different heckling behaviours, as my data illustrate. In interactional settings, heckling is often *competing* and potentially *emergent* (see Watts 2010), as the heckler can 'get a voice' and affiliate with the metaparticipants through the (potentially symbolic) ritualistic attempt of halting the speech/performance of the PSP (hence 'competing' with him). For example, in extract (1), the long silence in turn 3 indicates that the heckler manages to take the floor for a certain period of time, i.e. her performance 'competes' with that of Chang; the emergent nature of the heckle becomes clear as the interaction unfolds between the PSP and the heckler. As the PSP has an institutionalised right to counter-act, the disruptive act tends to motivate him to react to the repeated attacks. In presentational settings, heckling is usually *concurring* and potentially *predesigned*, as the heckler can acquire a voice and affiliate with the audience by continuously disturbing the PSP's ongoing speech/

19. See morality also in Section 4. A noteworthy case is represented by the online article: http://www.salon.com/2013/06/05/michelle_obamas_heckler_win/.

20. On the problem of directly responding to certain forms of heckling, see also a brief empirical description in Eisenstadt (1958).

performance, and the PSP has no right to directly react to the disruption. This can be illustrated by extract (2), in which the actions of the PSP and the heckler take place in a simultaneous ‘concurring’ way. This form of heckling is predesigned not only due to its schematic characteristic (e.g. abusive reference to a physical property of an athlete as in 2 counts as schematic in such events),²¹ but also because, as Section 3.3 illustrates, it can actually necessitate preparation work. Note that I claim that the emergent/predesigned characteristics of these heckle types are only potential because emergence vs. predesign are tendencies in my data which seem to interrelate with the competing/concurring modes.

The interrelation between interactional–elevated settings and competing–emergent heckling, on the one hand, and presentational–exposed settings and concurring–predesigned heckling, on the other, is only a tendency afforded by the interpersonal dynamics of these settings. Yet, whilst in interactional–elevated settings, concurring–predesigned behaviour can take place (e.g. when a stand-up comedian or a politician is being booed off by hecklers), it is significantly rarer for competing–emergent heckling to appear in presentational–exposed settings. This is because such settings do not usually afford the interactional type of heckling; e.g. a sports heckler’s or a traditional theatre performance audience’s disruptive shouting is not interactional, if one understands interaction in the form of interdependent actions (e.g. Baker 1999), in the sense that institutional norms prevent the PSP from directly reacting to it.

Consequently, it is also rare in my data for the two types of heckling to transform into each other. A simpler question is why interactional (competing–emergent) heckling behaviour is not usually replaced with the concurring–predesigned form: once a heckler manages to affiliate himself with the audience through interacting with the PSP, it is not logical for him to ‘withdraw’ from this interactional participation status. But in fact it is unusual even for concurring–predesigned heckling behaviour to transform into competing–emergent heckling. This is partly due to the following two factors:

- Physical constraints in those interactional–elevated settings which accidentally trigger concurring–predesigned heckling: e.g. in a political speech held in a large room, it can be difficult for the heckler who holds up a sign or tries to boo off the PSP (concurring–predesigned heckling) to obtain the microphone and de facto compete with the PSP;²²

21. See more on the use of ‘boo’ as a ritual, i.e. as a schematic and conventionalised performance in Kádár (2013).

22. This reality has been described by an online documentary (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8GXskjzQnvo>) as follows: “But the balance of power is rarely in the heckler’s favor. The

- The interactional constraints of such settings: if an interaction, such as a parliament debate, necessitates concurring–predesigned forms of heckling, the PSP also tends to have the institutional affordances to counter heckler attempts to switch to an interactional mode.

The operation of such constraints and affordances is illustrated by the following recent (2013) case of political heckling in the Hungarian Parliament (example 3). Members of the far right radical party Jobbik interrupted a debate on the so-called ‘Act of Land’, by standing behind the pulpit of the Acting Head of the debate, János Latorcai, and holding up the following large sign:

A magyar föld átjászsása idegeneknek: HAZAÁRULÁS!
Giving Hungarian land to foreigners is: TREASON!

The sign — which can be interpreted as a form of ritualistic performance (see Section 3.3), as it is meant to display the message of a group of people in a dramatic way to a wide audience — also displayed two shaking hands, symbolising the European Union and the governing centralist party Fidesz, and flags of countries which the radicals claim profit from the Act of Land, including e.g. Germany, Israel and Russia. Interestingly, as the following transcript illustrates, the leader of the radicals, who stood right at the back of the Acting President, could not transform his group’s concurring–predesigned heckling into a competing–emergent mode. That is, although they managed to disrupt the work of the Parliament, they could not effectively take the floor in the course of the interaction.

(3)

JL = János Latorcai (Acting Head)

GV = Gábor Vona (leader of the radical party)

JL: 1. a (1.0) Házba hogy (1.0) alávetik magukat

GV: 2. ((inaudible)) ((inaudible))

JL: 3. az Országgyűlés honlapján (.)

GV: 4. ((inaudible)) ((inaudible))

JL: 5. az elnök úr által megjelent (1.0) rendnek (.)

GV: 6. rendszabályoknak melyek az ülést

[...]

JL: 7. önöknek nincs lehetőségük

JL: 8. vélemény nyilvánításra

VG: 9. ((inaudible))

JL: 10. amennyire (.) bocsánat frakcióvezető

VG: 11. ((inaudible))

politician has a podium and a security detail; it’s not really a fair fight. The politician also has a microphone, meaning that the heckler has to scream at the top of their lungs just to be heard.”

JL: 12. úr most egyelőre (.) a (1.0) vendégeikhez

JL: 13. szölok

[...]

JL: 1. the (1.0) Parliament that (1.0) you oblige

GV: 2. ((inaudible)) ((inaudible))

JL: 3. the Parliament's (.) webpage

GV: 4. ((inaudible)) ((inaudible))

JL: 5. regulations (1.0) published by the President (.)

GV: 6. these rules are meant to make discussions

[...]

JL: 7. you are not allowed

JL: 8. to express your opinion

GV: 9. ((inaudible))

JL: 10. and if (.) excuse me mr. faction

GV: 11. ((inaudible))

JL: 12. leader but right now (.) I (1.0) communicate with

JL: 13. the guests [reference to participants brought in by the radical parliament faction]

(Retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Og_4yg_Y5D4#at=26)

JL: looks at the crowd and clearly ignores

GV;

GV: gesticulates and, standing behind

JL's chair, moves closer to JL

GV: gesticulates and moves slightly
closer to JL;

JL: looks at the crowd

JL: raises his arm and pointing
towards the audience; continu-
ously avoids looking at GV

Notably, although JL makes several emphatic pauses (Wood and Kroger 2000), without a microphone GV is not able to utilise these pauses to 'get the floor through interruption' (see e.g. Bennett 1981). JL also ignores GV's attempts to converse directly by not acknowledging his interruptions until turn 10. This performance of ignoring the heckler (or acting in a passive way; see Section 3.2) is also reinforced on the non-verbal level: JL ignores GV, who initiates interaction through gestures, by looking at the crowd and not changing his bodily posture. Although in turns 10–13, JL acknowledges GV's interruption, this acknowledgement functions as a rebuke, i.e. JL does not allow GV to take the floor, and at the non-verbal level he continues to ignore GV's presence by avoiding looking at him or even turning his body towards him.

It is important to note that the lack of transition between the two types of heckling is also due to the fact that these social practices are associated with roles, i.e. they display certain interactional identities.²³ Whilst heckling is a form of disruption by means of which the heckler can 'acquire a voice' for his opinion (see Jordan 2011), getting a voice does not inherently imply that the heckler wants to interrupt in an *interactional way* and to give up his role as a disruptive heckler via

23. I agree with interactional role theorists, such as Turner (2001: 234) who argues that "the patterning of behavior that constitutes roles arises initially and recurrently out of the dynamics of interaction". Accordingly, once an interaction between the heckler and PSP unfolds, it is likely that the interactants are provided, and provide themselves, with certain attributes.

an on-stage ‘competing’ performance. This situation is illustrated by the following extract, which represents the heckling of a video-recorded political speech. Whilst a transition occurs here between the presentational–exposed and interactional–elevated modes — the PSP and his supporters aim to transform this presentational setting into an interactional one in order to cope with the heckler’s challenge — the heckler refuses to switch to an interactional mode, even though the change of setting would allow this.

(4)

BK = Ben Konop

H = heckler

SUP = group of supporters around the PSP

[An extended period of heckling occurs before the start of the transcript]

- | | | |
|-------|---|-------------------------------------|
| BK: | 1. we are here again to ((laughs)) | BK: smiles and looks towards the |
| H: | 2. boooo booo liar booo | ground, then he turns his head |
| BK: | 3. (10.0) | towards the heckler, and finally he |
| BK: | 4. all right | turns back to the camera |
| HL | 5. booo Ben Konop liar booo | |
| SUP: | 6. why don’t you come on down and tell all our | BK: smiles then turns head towards |
| SUP: | 7. TV cameras what your problem is (.) there | the heckler; the camera then shows |
| BK: | 8. yeah | H who smiles and then shakes his |
| SUP: | 9. ((inaudible)) | head |
| BK: | 10. let’s just get (.) let’s get it out of the way | |
| BK: | 11. and then I can say my piece and you can say your piece | |
| [...] | | |
| BK: | 12. no you are not coming down here (.) okay well then | |
| BK: | 13. let me speak my piece and maybe they’ll come interview you afterwards | |
| BK: | 14. and you can present your argument okay | |
| BK: | 15. that’s fair (4.0) | |
| BK: | 16. all right (2.0) stage four | |
| SUP: | 17. ((giggle)) | |
| BK: | 18. ok we’re here at Parkway for a very serious issue | |
| H: | 19. booo liar | |
- (Retrieved from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9dNdIV6eg8>)

This interaction takes place after Ben Konop, a US politician, is interrupted several times by a heckler in the street, whilst he tries to deliver a speech in front of a camera. In each case of interruption Konop stops, and looks towards the ground — this body language seems to symbolise disaffiliation with the heckler’s behaviour — and then he turns back to the camera. In the excerpt analysed here, the heckler gets the invitation to present his argument, when in turns 6 and 7 one of Konop’s supporters invites him to come down from the terrace of his home. Konop takes up this idea: he not only repeats his supporter’s invitation, but in this case he also

turns his head and upper body towards the heckler and repeats the invitation, hence giving emphasis to the act (see Norrick 1987). However, the heckler refuses both the invitation and the request to let Konop finish what he wants to say (“that’s fair”), and he heckles Konop again, who after the latter, attempts to affiliate with the metaparticipants through humour (uttering: “stage four”).

In summary, transitioning from concurring–predesigned to competing–emergent heckling is difficult, although it is possible and in certain interactions the heckler can even *take over* the PSP’s role. Such a case can be illustrated by a case of the stand-up comedian Jamie Kennedy who was first heckled in a concurring–predesigned way (the heckler screamed swearwords in a large hall and was not able to interact with Kennedy), but after he angrily left the podium the heckler occupied the stage.²⁴ The relationship between interactional settings and forms of heckling is illustrated by the following figure:

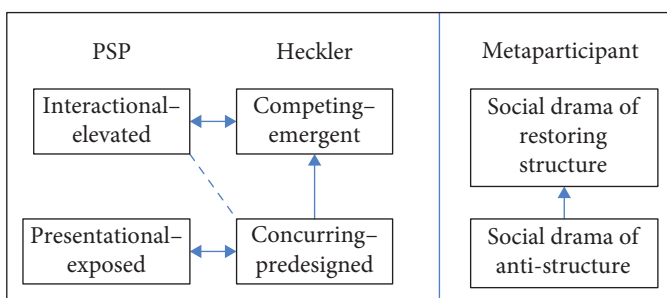


Figure 1. Types of heckling

The left side of the figure represents the interaction between the PSP and the heckler:

- the two sided arrows indicate the default relationship between setting types and heckling types;
- the dashed line denotes that concurring–predesigned heckling may, occasionally, occur in interactional–elevated settings;
- the one-sided arrow indicates that concurring–predesigned heckling can, potentially, transform into competing–emergent heckling, but this does not tend to happen the other way around.

The right side of the figure represents the relationship between the act of heckling and the attitudes/feelings of the metaparticipants, by drawing on Turner’s (1982) above-discussed concepts of ‘structure’ and ‘anti-structure’. The interactional dynamics that the interactional–elevated and the presentational–exposed settings afford seem to trigger different expectations. The following sections illustrate that

24. See a clip of this interaction at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0AJm-iwxRug>.

these different expectations influence evaluations of the heckler's and the PSP's behaviours, and that they are also present in micro-level interactional features.

While the researcher cannot peep into the metaparticipants' minds, it is clear that heckling is a salient interactional event from a metaparticipant perspective. Psychologists argue that certain phenomena, including interactional moves in various settings, are more likely to stimulate attention than others (e.g. Pashler 1999). As Bernstein and Wright (2005: 127) note,

[s]timulus characteristics that tend to capture attention include abrupt changes in lighting or color (such as flashing lights), movement, and the appearance of unusual shapes [...] attending to some stimuli makes us less able to attend to others. In other words, attention is *selective*.

In a sense, heckling is an action that inherently draws attention as it upsets the interactional order.

My data suggest that once awareness is raised through the act of heckling, it triggers anticipatory expectations towards the event. As Pezzulo et al. (2009: 3) note, anticipatory expectation is "a process or behaviour that does not only depend on past and present but also predictions, expectations, or beliefs about the future", i.e. it is tied to repeated social practices/genres. Since the goal of public speech/performance is to affiliate across the board with metaparticipants, awareness of the presence of audience expectations triggers what experts of psychology define as audience 'pressure' (see e.g. Grush 1978; Borden 1980). The different affordances and constraints of interactional-elevated and presentational-exposed settings trigger different anticipatory expectations towards, and consequent pressures on, the PSP. Such pressures are, of course, default ones, as one cannot predict (or even describe with full preciseness) what the metaparticipants' states of mind are in an actual setting, all the more so, because the researcher can only rely on (limited) evidence within the data. However, it is necessary to note that the PSP may also feel pressured by reflexively anticipating metaparticipant expectancies. As Kádár and Haugh (2013) argue, anticipating in interaction involves presumptive forms of reasoning where inferences are grounded in experience and associative links. Thus, the PSP's actual action may not, in every case, even correlate with actual expectations: the PSP may simply feel a certain degree of pressure to counter-act in a specific way due to the constraints and affordances of the institutional setting in which the act of heckling takes place.

In the case of competing-emergent heckling, the audience seems, typically, to expect the PSP to restore structure from anti-structure. Such a counter-performance is expected as the PSP has the right and capability to do so. In the case of concurring-predesigned heckling, there seems to be less pressure on the PSP, because the institutional setting triggers the anticipation that the heckled one has

little opportunity to directly counter-act (see e.g. extract 2), although successful counter-performance does of course tend to be valued. Thus, referring again to Turner’s (1982) terminology, concurring–predesigned heckling is expected to become a social drama of anti-structure by default, even though it can transform into a drama of restoring structure through successful counter-performance, as extract (8) below illustrates.

At this stage, it is necessary to refer to an experiment I undertook, which supports this model of the participants’ anticipatory expectations. In the video-recorded data studied, I measured the length of time the camera focussed on the PSP and the heckler. As the length of every interaction differs, I calculated focus proportionally. For example, if in a 1 minute and 48 seconds long recording the camera’s focus is on the PSP for 60 seconds, on the heckler for 44 seconds, and for the remaining 4 seconds the camera is moving between the two persons; I took off the ‘dead time’ of 4 seconds, and calculated proportions as follows:

Full length = 104 sec (100%)
PSP = 60 sec (57.7%)
Heckler = 44 sec (42.3%)

The rounded results of this experiment are as follows:

	Time range of focus on the PSP	Time range of focus on the heckler
interactional–elevated	72%–91%	9%–28%
presentational–exposed	54%–85%	15%–46%

Figure 2. The camera’s focus on the PSP and the heckler

To revisit Section 1.1, I do not regard such quantitative evidence as significant by itself. The camera’s focus does not necessarily represent the metaparticipants’ focus, and also the time devoted to the PSP vs. the heckler may depend on the video-recording person’s relationship with one or both of them. However, one can argue that the cameraman presents an audience perspective. The significant focus difference between interactional–elevated and presentational–exposed settings illustrates that in the former setting more attention is devoted to the PSP, which indicates raised expectations for him to counter-perform, while in the latter setting the heckler gets relatively more attention.

In what follows, let me illustrate how forms of heckling operate in interactional–elevated and presentational–exposed settings.

3.2 Interactional–elevated settings

The PSP’s and the heckler’s performances tend to clearly differ in interactional–elevated settings, as the following excerpt (5) illustrates. The interaction studied here took place between the showman Jamie Kennedy and a female heckler who felt that Kennedy’s use of the word “waitress” was ‘politically incorrect’.

(5)

JK = Jamie Kennedy

H = Heckler

AUD = audience

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>JK: 1. and I had a really interesting erhm (.) waitress service here (1.5)</p> <p>2. that woman took my order at this diner and how</p> <p>3. much =this has (inaudible)</p> <p>H: 4. =server (1.0) they are called server (2.0)</p> <p>AUD: 5. ((laughing/booing)) (5.0)</p> <p>JK: 6. wow a a woman is proud to be a</p> <p>JK: 7. waitress (0.5)</p> <p>AUD: 8. ((laughter))</p> <p>JK: 9. it’s a (7.0) it’s weird when</p> <p>AUD: 10. ((laughter))</p> <p>JK: 11. I see them I just say hey bitch um hi</p> <p>AUD: 12. ((laughter))</p> | <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px;">JK: looks at audience; bodily posture is that of the public speaker</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px;">JK: looks in the heckler’s direction, his mouth slightly opens and he gulps; H: nods and smiles</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px;">JK: looks at audience, his face shows surprise and scorn</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px;">JK: looks at audience, massages his eyebrows (sign of tiredness)</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px;">JK: smiles at audience (acknowledgement of laughter); H: laughs and nods</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px;">JK: performs a parody of waitress by first raising his hand and then shaking his bottom towards the audience</div> |
|--|---|

(retrieved from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITBfwhp8XMY>)

The PSP’s ritualistic counter-performance comes into operation after the act of competing–emergent heckling occurs in turns 3–4. Kennedy — who speaks in a conventional presentational mode before his talk is disrupted (he looks in different directions and he has what one would describe as the typical bodily posture of a public speaker) — suddenly stares in the heckler’s direction, opens his mouth and gulps, which seems to be a potential sign of 1) surprise and 2) preparation for countering the heckler. The audience’s reaction also reveals that this is a liminal transition point in the interaction, as the heckler’s interruption triggers laughter and booing.

If one analyses Kennedy’s interactional behaviour, it becomes evident that his ‘answer’ to the heckler is actually a dramatic performance. On the level of non-linguistic behaviour, there are various signs which show that Kennedy aims to align with his audience, by the ritual of restoring the normative order of the interaction, rather than to interact with the heckler:

- In turn 5, after getting through the initial surprise, Kennedy redirects his gaze to the audience, and he disaffiliates with the heckler through facial expressions (his face shows surprise and scorn) and gestures (he massages his eyebrows, which seems to be a sign of ‘tiredness’);

- When the metaparticipants reward the counter-performance with laughter, Kennedy smiles at them;
- Finally Kennedy performs a parody of a waitress (first by raising his hand and then shaking his bottom towards the audience).

In terms of language use, it is clear that Kennedy undertakes something more than directly responding to the heckler:

- He first utters a mock acknowledgement of the interruption's appropriateness ("wow"; see Culpeper 1996 on 'mock politeness') and then refers to the heckler in the third person ("a woman");²⁵
- Following this, in turns 9 and 11 he begins to narrate a mock ordering ("it's weird when ... I just"); through this performance he completely regains the floor to speak.

The audience's reaction in turns 8, 10 and 12 illustrates that in interactional-elevated settings the metaparticipants expect the PSP to ritually counter-perform and restore the interactional structure. In these turns, laughter arguably is a supportive move, considering that Kennedy is a comedian, and such "supportive laughter" (see Björkman 2011) reflects indirect encouragement for the PSP to proceed with the counter-performance.

The heckler's competing-emergent interruption can also be interpreted as a sort of performance, although this performance is much simpler than that of the PSP. In extract (5), the woman not only interrupts Kennedy, but she also uses the silence that the interruption creates to rearticulate (see Hoffman 1991) her utterance, i.e. she makes a 'non-spontaneous' repetition (Clark 2006: 379). The fact that she refers to "servers" in the third person gives her utterance a potentially theatrical shape, as this rhetorical technique animates the voice of a group that is claimed to be being ignored. On the non-linguistic level, the heckler nods and smiles, supposedly in order to affiliate herself with the audience in the social drama. The performance scope of the heckler's utterance is best illustrated by the audience's reaction: the metaparticipants react to her words with laughter/booing, i.e. they 'frame' (Goffman 1974) the interruption as an on-stage part of the comedy (and consequently they frame the heckler's interactional status as a heckler rather than as an 'average' metaparticipant).

The present section has so far illustrated that in interactional-elevated settings the PSP is expected to counter-perform and this counter-performance is triggered either by the metaparticipants' expectations or the PSP's anticipation of those

25. This utterance of Kennedy is ambiguous, and it might be that he uses this reference in a generic sense.

expectations, or both. As a matter of course, the setting in which the act of heckling takes place influences understandings of anti-performance as a ‘performance on stage’. In the case of stand-up comedy, the PSP’s counter-action is naturally associated with ‘performance’, and it is evaluated accordingly (e.g. Kennedy receives supportive laughter). Yet, if one accepts Turner’s (1982) claim that performance is present in any social drama, it becomes clear that the PSP’s and the heckler’s roles — and basic expectations of these roles — are relatively similar in any context, all the more because public speech is an inherently theatrical social practice. The following excerpt illustrates this point; this interaction took place when the US First Lady Michelle Obama was heckled by gay rights activist Ellen Sturtz (June 2013). A noteworthy element in the conversation is that Obama actually refuses to counter-perform, but this is a symbolic refusal which defeats the heckler — i.e. mock non-performance becomes a ritualistic performance. It is pertinent to note that acting through ‘non-action’ is a typical feature of ritual communication (Kádár 2013).

(6)

MO = Michelle Obama

ES = Ellen Sturtz

AUD = audience

MO: 1. and I don’t care what you believe

MO: 2. and we don’t

ES: 3. ((inaudible))

MO: 4. wait wait wait

ES: 5. ((inaudible)) executive order

MO: 6. (.) one of the things I

ES: 7. ((inaudible))

MO: 8. one of the things I don’t do (1.0) well (1.5) is this

AUD: 9. ((enthusiastic laughter/clapping))

[...]

MO: 10. [listen to me or] you can take the mike

MO: walks off the podium, faces the heckler

MO: 11. but I’m leaving (.) so you all decide

AUD: 12. no no I’m sure nooooo

((various voices))

ES: 13. I need your husband to

MO: 14. you have one choice

MO: begins to dramatically walk out, then interacts with other members of the audience, with body language which suggests appeal; following the audience’s request to stay she smiles and makes her way back to the podium

AUD: 15. ((various voices)) no please don’t leave

(retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aE09MScupks>)

Turns 1–9 are only available in an audio-recorded form, and so this part does not allow studying facial expressions and gestures. The linguistic analysis of this section illustrates that Obama restores interactional order by refusing to counter-perform (“one of the things I don’t do, well, is this [i.e. answering hecklers]”); notably,

long pauses in this utterance are supposedly meant to emphasise the refusal. The theatrical nature of Obama's behaviour is illustrated by the audience's reaction: the metaparticipants applaud her, which shows that her symbolic non-performance is actually interpreted and framed as a successful (counter-)performance.

The following, video-recorded part further illustrates the theatrical nature of Obama's linguistic and non-linguistic actions. She first ritually showcases her 'toughness' by walking off the podium and facing the heckler, and then by symbolically giving the metaparticipants a *fait accompli*, as she makes them decide whether they want her or the heckler to leave. The noteworthy element in this action, which shows its theatrical-ritualistic nature, is that it takes place only *after* Obama clearly manages to affiliate herself with the audience (the metaparticipants' reaction in turn 9 reveals that they take her side). Obama puts further dramatic 'pressure' on the audience as she begins to leave the place of the event, in spite of the fact that various metaparticipants request her to stay. She then exchanges sympathetic words with the audience, and 'lets herself be convinced' to return to the podium, while the audience applauds her.

Just as in the previous case, the metaparticipants (and supposedly the lay observers) seem to expect Obama to 'do something' (counter-perform). This is illustrated by the aforementioned fact that they reward Obama's symbolic refusal to counter-perform with laughter and clapping.

3.3 Presentational-exposed settings

Presentational-exposed settings provide more affordances to the heckler to perform the social drama of anti-structure, as such settings trigger concurring-pre-designed forms of heckling. It is pertinent here to revisit that both concurring and presentational heckling can be constituted by both verbal and written features (i.e. signs and posters, see extract 3). Written forms of heckling are noteworthy for the analyst not only because they illustrate that heckling is an action which may involve preparation work (see Section 3.1), but also because they show similarities with written genres in other social drama types, such as humiliation placards made during the so-called 'Cultural Revolution' in China (1966–1974).²⁶

26. As I previously argued (Kádár 2011), in the Cultural Revolution the victims of mass rallies (e.g. 'counter-revolutionaries' and clerical persons) were forced to wear 'shame placards' as they were paraded and beaten in front of crowds of spectators. Shame placards were designed in considerably elaborate ways to humiliate the victim, e.g. the victim's name was written with misspelt, badly designed and asymmetrically arranged Chinese characters, while the judgment of the person occurred on the same placard in beautiful calligraphy, hence emphasising the divide between the victim and the 'masses'. These mass rallies had certain staged elements to boost the dramatic effect of the placards, e.g. the victim was forced to kneel and bend his neck,

The interactional operation of heckling sings/posters reveals an interaction between language and graphic/non-linguistic communication. For example, in the case of sports heckling, which is a representative case of concurring–pre-designed heckling, hecklers often use carefully designed signs to draw attention, and in many cases artistic performance clearly plays an important role in the operation of such signs, as the following case of a heckled hockey player illustrates:

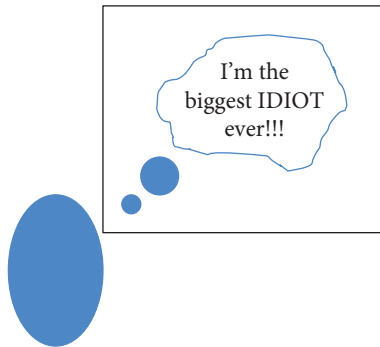


Illustration 1. The heckling sign of a hockey player²⁷

This sign was displayed behind the plastic fence which separates the players from the audience. The message in the cartoon thought bubble can function properly only if it is displayed close to the PSP's head in a way that those who sit on the opposite side of the stadium see it as if the player himself had such 'thoughts'. Signs like this not only illustrate the artistic element and preparation work involved in certain concurring–pre-designed forms of heckling, but they also show that heckling can operate in complex ways. In the case of this sign, the PSP was supposedly meant to realise that he is being heckled through the reaction of those metaparticipants who can see the sign from the other side of the stadium.

As was mentioned in passing in Section 3.1, in presentational–exposed settings the PSP is not supposed to directly counter-act. Although the PSP can attempt to transform such settings into interactional–elevated ones as extract (4) shows, if the context does not afford such a transformation and the PSP fails to continue his performance, he is likely to lose his 'professional face' (see Planken 2005). This is illustrated by the following case of the British journalist Nick Robinson, who was heckled by peace protesters who held up a two-sided sign during his report on Britain's participation in the Afghan war.

while behind him stood members of the 'Red Guards'; the contrast between the kneeling and the standing persons was meant to express the 'people's' victory over 'class enemies'. To sum up, the linguistic message of these placards was reinforced by certain graphic and non-linguistic ways.

27. See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeZm9S1yzSo> .

(7)

NR = Nick Robinson

H = Heckler(s)

NR: 1. overseas aid for example

NR: 2. and he's doing it by classic welfare (.)

NR: 3. but he will not write the next chapters

NR: 4. in this story (.) that will be written as

NR: 5. councils decide what to cut (.) as others decide

NR: 6. what to cut he says the title for this saga is back

NR: 7. from the brink (.) others may say (1.0)

NR: 8. it's over the edge (10.0)

NR: 9. ((grasps the sign and breaks it to pieces))

H: 10. ((clasp/cheering))

H: 11. you should be ashamed to yourself mate

H: 12. you should be ashamed (.) shame on you mate

((NR leaves the podium, H approaches him, and a debate begins))

(Retrieved from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rU8YU3loeQ>)

H: hold up the sign with the text "CUT THE WAR NOT THE POOR"; then the sign is turned, and it reads: "Bring Our Troops Home Now" (first four words in black, "Now" in red, supposedly with the goal of emphasis); the sign is moved towards the centre of the stage, right next to NR

NR: looks at the camera, then smiles and slowly turns round; half way through he uses a handkerchief to rub his mouth (potential sign of embarrassment/anger) and then turns towards H

H: holds up another sign

The hecklers' concurring–predesigned action shows similarity with illustration (1), in that it operates via ritualistic performance — i.e. it displays the hecklers' values/beliefs to the public (rather than just the PSP). In fact, this ritualistic performance is not clearly targeted *against* the PSP: instead of humiliating the PSP as in the case of illustration (1), the hecklers want to display their peace protest. Yet, in terms of physical action the hecklers act identically to the sport heckler in the hockey stadium: they move the sign slowly towards the PSP and then keep it close to him, supposedly anticipating that the sign will be recorded by the camera (and a side camera operated by another protester). As they move the sign they also turn it, which is part of the performance as such a move has the potential to draw attention. In turn 8, Robinson keeps a long silence and smiles, which technically signals the end of the report. However, at this point, Robinson seems to realise that something has gone wrong, supposedly from the facial expression of his colleague who is standing opposite him. As he slowly turns round, he displays a potential sign of embarrassment/anger as he rubs his mouth with a handkerchief, and then he loses his temper as he grasps the sign. The hecklers mockingly clap and cheer him, hence acknowledging this outrage. This mocking behaviour is supposedly generated by Robinson's failure in keeping his role as a presentational–exposed PSP. Note that whilst at this point the interview is formally over, the PSP is supposed to 'follow' his normative role, which is on-going as long as he is on the stage. Also, technically speaking, the interactional event remains staged, as one of the protesters films it, and both the PSP (who can see this camera even though he talks to another camera) and the hecklers are supposed to be aware of this fact.

The negative evaluation of the PSP's failure becomes clear in two respects:

- Within the actual interaction, the hecklers reflect on Robinson's outburst by switching to a competing-emergent mode of heckling;
- In his blog, Robinson expressed regret for losing his temper, as he wrote: "I have a confession. After the news was over, I grabbed the sign and ripped it up — apparently you can watch video of my sign rage in full glorious technicolour on the web. I lost my temper and I regret that."²⁸ As Robinson is the offended one, the rationale behind this apology seems to be the conflict between his role as a PSP in a presentational-exposed setting and his direct reaction to the heckling.

In presentational-exposed settings, the PSP can defeat the heckler either by avoiding reacting or by reacting indirectly, i.e. through managing to counter-perform while the 'scripted' show continues according to the presentational-exposed role. This latter technique is illustrated by the following extract, which represents an interaction between the baseball player Tony Gwynn Jr. and a sport heckler.

(8)

TG = Tony Gwynn Jr.

H = heckler

M = metaparticipants, including peers of the heckler and other members of the audience

H: 1. hey don't act like you're playing

M: 2. ((mixed voices))

TG: 3. ((changes bodily posture and puts his glove behind his bottom))

M: 4. ((laughter))

M: 5. ((in altered tone of parody)) and I'm gonna (1.0) shut up

M: 6. ((laughter))

(Retrieved from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTGnh0rcQsc>)

TG: avoids turning towards the heckler but changes his posture

TG: uses his glove to imitate speech; someone in the audience utters the words in turn 5 with some delay, following the movement of TG's fingers

In this interaction, the PSP succeeds by managing to counter-perform in an indirect way, and as comments on the YouTube page in which this video was found made it clear, through his performance the PSP even managed to turn fans of the other team onto his side.²⁹ Throughout this whole interaction, Gwynn avoids turning towards the heckler and so he superficially keeps his presentational-exposed

28. See: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1322547/BBCs-Nick-Robinson-loses-cool-sign-waving-anti-war-protesters.html#ixzz2Wv4OWosr>.

29. There are various comments on this point on YouTube on which this interaction was found. For example, a poster notes: "He [i.e. the heckler] got owned because TG Jr was able to get the Rockies fans on his side. The guy as you can plainly tell became the joke... Ranter".

performance. Furthermore, he skilfully manages to affiliate with the metaparticipants when he puts his gloves behind his bottom; this move seems to symbolise the heckler's insignificance (the heckler's imagined mouth is moved close to the PSP's bottom). The audience rewards Gwynn's counter-performance with laughter, and this seems to motivate Gwynn to continue his counter-performance as he moves his fingers in the glove to imitate speech. A metaparticipant interprets this act as an invitation, and he *counter-heckles the heckler* by animating the heckler's voice in an altered tone of parody, uttering "and I'm gonna shut up". In turn, the audience rewards this act with laughter.

To sum up, in presentational-exposed settings the PSP can utilise an ad hoc counter-performance, which is not part of the ongoing event. This ad hoc counter-performance protects the flow of the event on stage, and it is *symbolically* indirect, as it operates like 'aside' utterances in theatre.

4. Discussion

Having described heckling as a form of performance in social drama, it is worth thinking about the question of how this phenomenon can be theorised. As Jordan and Campbell (2013) argue, "the heckler, a person who disrupts performances, speeches and public addresses should be considered as a metaphorical figurehead of impoliteness." Whilst I agree with this view to some extent, I believe that it reflects a specific understanding of the act of heckling, and it raises some questions from the perspective of the (im)politeness researcher. As the present section argues, heckling should be approached through the lenses of ritual theory (Kádár 2013) rather than (im)politeness theory.

The main difference between ritual and (im)politeness resides, in my view, in their realisation: (im)politeness is primarily related to *interpretation and evaluation*, as various (im)politeness researchers such as Eelen (2001) and Watts (2003) argue, whilst relational rituals such as heckling should be approached first of all from the perspective of *action*. That is, whilst an utterance becomes (im)polite only if it is understood so by the interactants, when the ritual act of disturbing the PSP is performed it seems to leave little ambiguity as to whether the given social action 'qualifies' as heckling or not.³⁰ As the following discussion shows, what tends to be

30. While an in-depth study of this topic is beyond the scope of this paper, I have studied online discussion forums to find cases when the value of a certain utterance as heckling is debated. Although occasionally people seem to raise issues as to, for example, whether a given question counts as 'a heckle or a serious question', the limited occurrence of such metapragmatic discussions seem to indicate that usually heckling causes little ambiguity.

ambiguous is rather the relationship between the act of heckling and impoliteness: considering the wide range of different understandings and contextual interpretations of heckling, it can only ever be potentially related to impoliteness. This variability of understandings and interpretations not only includes scholarly ones (see Section 2), but in fact it also manifests itself on other levels. As Kádár and Haugh (2013: 86) argue, there are four interrelated perspectives from which the nature of (im)politeness, as an assumed part of our social reality, can be understood:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Participant understandings | <i>first-order participant</i> |
| Metaparticipant understandings | |
| 2. Emic understandings | <i>first-order expectancies</i> |
| Etic understandings | |

From an *observer* perspective, there are four inter-related ways in which we can account for how we evaluate something to be polite, not polite, impolite and so on in the first place.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 3. Lay observer understandings | <i>second-order observer</i> |
| Analyst understandings | |
| 4. Folk theoretic understandings | <i>second-order conceptualisation</i> |
| Theoretical understandings | |

Obviously, these perspectives trigger potentially different interpretations of the impoliteness value of a certain act of heckling. In what follows, due to limitations of space, let us focus only on selective interpretations; as a simple example, let us take Michelle Obama's case (see extract 6). From a PSP perspective, which is a participant point of view, the heckler's behaviour is not only face-threatening but also supposedly impolite,³¹ considering that the event takes place in a small-size, private and friendly setting, which is presentational and exposed. In such a setting, heckling seems to be less expected than in other types of political speech; also, Obama is the First Lady who is traditionally not the subject of political heckling (Templin 1999). The potential impoliteness value of this act of heckling is confirmed by the metaparticipants' reaction — they unanimously support Obama — as well as by second-order feedback from lay observers; if one follows up online discussion on this event, it becomes evident that many commentators described

31. I agree with the claim that, unlike what Brown and Levinson (1987) argue, face and (im)politeness are essentially different phenomena, with plenty of overlap (see Bargiela-Chiappini 2000; Haugh 2013). Of course, heckling is not only face-threatening for the PSP, who can protect his professional face through public counter-performance, but also for the heckler who risks his face when he engages in the act of heckling (see Beebe and Takahashi 1989 on the mutual face-threatening effect of such contexts).

Sturtz's behaviour as 'rude'.³² On the other hand, it is more of a question whether this act of heckling is impolite from the heckler's perspective; in an interview (*Daily Mail*) Sturtz commented on her heckle as follows:

When I blurted out my comments during the First Lady's speech, it was a spontaneous reaction to her saying, [...] Right now, today, we have an obligation to stand up for those kids.³³

Describing heckling as a "spontaneous reaction" and as a morally right act of "stand[ing] up" for the rights of others, frames it as an appropriate form of behaviour. Considering that impoliteness interrelates with inappropriateness,³⁴ it can be argued that from Sturtz's perspective, her act has an ambiguous relationship with impoliteness.³⁵

The metaparticipants, lay observers and in fact even analysts can either be positioned towards the PSP or the heckler, and this basic attitude potentially influences their evaluations of a certain performance and counter-performance (even though successful performance and counter-performance can change such 'evaluative attitudes', see Davidson 1999). Evaluations of performance and counter-performance of heckling may also be influenced by various factors, such as:

- Setting: As Culpeper (2011:23) argues, "Impoliteness is a negative attitude towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social organisation, including, in particular, how one person's or group's identities are mediated by others in interaction. Situated behaviours are viewed negatively when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they ought to be." In fact, in certain settings heckling does not conflict with participant/metaparticipant expectations, or even the PSP's expectation. Along with 'scripted' events of heckling — sometimes heckling is part of the script of a story, as in the case of Statler and Waldorf in the Muppet Show (Haberkorn 2009) — it is enough only to think about certain events such

32. Whilst I do not regard web searching as reliable, it is illustrative to note that the Google search "Ellen Sturtz rude" resulted in as many as 4,060 hits (search made on 28 June, 2013).

33. See: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2337914/Why-I-confronted-First-Lady-gay-rights-campaigner-Ellen-Sturtz-explains-actions-Washingtonfundraiser.html#ixzz2X7yoxb9X>

34. As Culpeper (2011:99) notes, impoliteness essentially belongs to the conceptual 'domain' of inappropriateness, even though "inappropriateness is a much broader notion than impoliteness".

35. This also illustrates that it is possible to be aware of being both rude and morally justified, which is certainly not how impoliteness normally operates; I am grateful to Pilar for pointing this out to me.

as football matches and some forms of stand-up comedy in which heckling counts as *normative* to a great extent. This normative element might be illustrated by popular discourse on the ‘rules’ of heckling. For example, a recent online article³⁶ lists 15 different rules for ‘appropriate’ heckling behaviour, the most thought-provoking of which is the following:

Politeness. Heckling is not polite. Heckling means the world has standards to live up to, and when artists fail, they thank you for pointing that out to them.

Once ‘impoliteness’ (in this context, a second-order folk theoretic understanding of impoliteness) is normativised in such ways, the relationship between impoliteness and heckling becomes problematic from a theoretical point of view.³⁷ If one considers Culpeper’s (2011) above definition of impoliteness as behaviour that conflicts with expectations, it is clear that heckling has an ambiguous relationship with impoliteness. It is also pertinent to note that heckling can be normativised as a strategy to resolve communicational difficulties. For example, in their noteworthy paper Jacobs and Jackson (1993: 150) describe an interview in which the heckler gave the following account of their heckle:

In this situation I think heckling is the only thing that has any sort of impact [...] [I started heckling] because I tried to discuss things rationally with him and got nowhere. I’d show logical contradictions and he’d just deny them.

- Morality: The above-discussed situational normativity of heckling can of course be overwritten if heckling goes beyond what is contextually expected, through violating the metaparticipants’ and/or lay observers’ moral standards. E.g. heckling at a sporting event can be acceptable, but when heckling becomes racist some of the audience may turn against the heckler. This is illustrated by the case of the tennis player Serena Williams:

*Tennis star Serena Williams reports that a heckler (Donald Winton of Cocoa Beach/Orlando, fl) in the stands has been shouting racial slurs to her during the match. Even other fans in the stands begin to point him out. The Heckler was arrested after the match and would later go on to tell the press that he admits that he heckled Serena, but he claims he never called the N-word as she said.*³⁸

36. See: http://www.litkicks.com/HolmanHeckle#.UcQs_r_vz3Q

37. On the normativisation process of impoliteness see Garcés-Conejos Blitvich (2009). Importantly, as Kádár (2013) argues, normativised practices of impoliteness often become ritualistic, and as such they lose from their offensive nature. A representative study on this phenomenon has been provided by Schriffin (1984) who showed that certain (ritualistic) practices of impoliteness are acceptable in many middle-class Jewish-American families.

38. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6TwAHL5K6U>

In summary, there is an important interface between heckling and impoliteness: due to its provocative nature heckling can easily be interpreted and evaluated as impolite. However, as the above discussion has illustrated, this is only a default interpretation/evaluation,³⁹ and heckling should be described from the perspective of ritual action rather than defined, on the second-order theoretical level, as a form of impoliteness (irrespective of the fact that it can be, of course, assessed as impolite). As heckling is an act which inherently generates awareness and raises expectations (see Section 3.1), there is probably no or little ambiguity in such acts from the observers' or the (meta-)participants' perspectives. A successfully performed act of heckling seems to be relatively exempt of ambiguity, and due to the expectations it triggers, the PSP's response is also understood as a counter-performance.

Understanding heckling as a relational ritual action, instead of associating it with impoliteness and attitude on the second-order theoretical level,⁴⁰ also helps us to describe its interpersonal function. For example, whilst both the heckler's and the PSP's behaviour can be ambiguous from the perspective of (im)politeness, they have a clear relational effect on metaparticipants. As performance and counter-performance represent ritualistic struggles for affiliation, in a sense they can either represent:

- A *relationally constructive* mode of affiliative action, i.e. when the PSP/heckler constructs a relationship with the metaparticipants; or
- A *stasis* mode of affiliative action (see Arundale 2010), i.e. when the PSP manages to maintain his existing relationship with the metaparticipants vis-à-vis successful (counter-)performance.

5. Conclusion

The present paper has modelled the phenomenon of heckling through a relational ritual framework, which approaches this phenomenon as a ritual action pair of performance and counter-performance. This approach describes the interactional dynamics of this complex phenomenon, and also it helps us describe different

39. This point is valid to other ritual practices of aggression; one can refer to, as a representative example, the case of ritual insults, which tend to be open to be interpreted as personal insults (see Kochman 1983; Schrifin's above-discussed 1984 also notes this phenomenon).

40. As it was noted already, heckling tends to be associated with impoliteness/ inappropriateness by language users and observers.

heckle types within a single framework, hence filling in an important gap in the field of pragmatics and interaction studies.

As heckling is regrettably neglected, albeit noteworthy, phenomenon, it is hoped that this paper will generate further interest in it. There are various issues related to heckling, which deserve further research, and here I just mention a few of these. It would be fruitful to conduct an in-depth cross-cultural examination of heckling, as most of the existing western studies on this topic approach it in an ethnocentric way, by describing it as a phenomenon which other cultures ‘borrow’ from the West (see Kádár, forthcoming). Researchers should also look into the historical roots of this phenomenon, and attempt to reconstruct its development across cultures. A sociolinguistic study on heckling could reveal social differences in the perception as well as the practices of this act.

Transcription symbols

- (.) noticeable pause
- (1.0) timed pause
- = interruption
- (()) transcriber’s explanation

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