

TIME, TIMING, AND (IM)POLITENESS IN ROMAN COMEDY

ŁUKASZ BERGER

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to investigate the use of time-related features of talk in evoking (im)politeness in Roman Comedy. To this end, I use evidence from the scansion of the text to identify syllable shortenings and accumulations of heavy (slow-pacing) tokens, as well as rhythmical patterns within utterances pronounced in socially charged situations. Moreover, the (im)polite value is associated with the meticulously timed delivery of speech acts (e.g., mocking threats) with particular focus on the culture-specific use of religious formulae. As a result, the paper tentatively presents some methods of recovering prosodic cues for verbal interaction, represented in the comedy text.