

## Developing a Pragmatic Quintuple Rating Scale of Dialogic Civility

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**ABSTRACT:** This study looks at how the praxis of dialogic civility can pragmatically be rated on a quintuple scale. Its purpose is to develop a systematic measure for dialogic civility by developing a pragmatic quintuple rating scale of dialogic civility (PQRSDC). In this study, dialogic civility is seen as a communicative pragmatic praxis in everyday communication. Further, by applying this rating scale to different contexts, the study contributes to the methodological development of pragmatics, as far as dialogic civility is concerned. The analysis shows how the pragmatic quintuple rating scale of dialogic civility plays a part in the choice of the pragmatic strategies used by interlocutors in their interaction. This study, thereby, suggests that dialogic civility can be a resource for indexing the degree of social distance between interlocutors.

### 1. The Concept of Dialogic Civility

Arnett and Arneson (1999: 1) introduce the concept of dialogic civility by defining it as a communicative praxis that is invited, but not enforced in interpersonal communication. Basically, the concept of dialogic civility is demanded in dialogic communication, when there is a kind of social distance between interlocutors when they interact with each other in a dialogically civil manner. Moreover, Arnett and Arneson (ibid.: 168) consider dialogic civility as a behavioural mode and attitude that exceeds politeness, etiquette, and nicety as it keeps a particular dialogic exchange going irrespective of any differences and diversity of views among interlocutors. In this study, dialogic civility can be defined as a pragmatic proper praxis that is realised by various pragmatic strategies as it guides interpersonal communication, in spite of the highly probable dispute and discordant viewpoints, to keep dialogic communication going with the least amount of face-threat.

## 2. Dialogic Civility in the American Society

To see the daylight of dialogic civility and its practices in a particular society, it is a matter of great importance to precisely probe the social nature of that society. What raised the Americans' awareness of the significance of civility and the iniquity of incivility is that uncivil communication is increasingly committed even by those who are typically the ones least expected to say so like politicians or public figures. In the American society, civility continues to be a potential problem and what makes it worse is social media. In the eyes of Carter (1998: 11), civility and respect for the communicative rules of conduct have been lost in modern American politics. On many occasions, Carter (*ibid.*) mourns the fierce forfeiture of civility in the American society as it has missed a great deal of "moral focus". For Andersson and Pearson (1999: 452), civility is the palpable provenance of power and an "acceptable ploy" in the American society which asserts the cultural superiority of some citizens rather than others. Lakoff (2005: 28) pays attention to the fact that Americans have been preoccupied with the concept of civility. For Boyd (2006: 868), civility is the "thickest ethicalness" that must be intensively invigorated especially in societies accentuated by inscrutable moral tangle like the American society. Guinness (2008: 5), in this regard, denotes that civility, in the American society, needs to be refashioned and wrested from the jaws of cultural wars. What is even worse, the spirit of incivility is pervaded in the American society like cancer (*ibid.*: 21). On this point, Buonfino and Mulgan (2009: 17) assure that civility is a "learned grammar of sociability" and "measure of the health of societies" where every citizen is responsible for civility. Civility is not a fact of nature as it can be personally chosen, molded, encouraged, nurtured, and rewarded (*ibid.*: 35). Zerilli (2014: 107) diagnoses a dire crisis that the American society suffers which is the decline of civility. Also, Lane (2017: 6) finds that American people look at incivility as a national problem that is woefully worsened. On this point, the basis causes of incivility, according to Lane (*ibid.*), are political campaigns, social media, pop culture, and the music industry. American people consider the 2016 presidential election as uncivil and they come to an agreement that uncivil speech by political leaders promotes greater incivility (Lane, *ibid.*: 7). Likewise, Thiranagama et al. (2018: 153) mentions that, in the American society, the early twenty-first century, especially in the presidency of Donald Trump, is accentuated by anger, disrespect, incivility, and insult. Pessimistically, Goens (2019: 33) sets forth a downbeat standpoint of civility when he describes it as a "problem" and an endless enigma in the United States where the American society confronts a severe and serious civility scarcity in their dialogic exchanges and such civility scarcity, indeed, needs a close examination. Hence, the main attraction of dialogic civility is its rareness. However, the context of the American Providence Court shows some signs of the availability of dialogic civility where the Chief Judge of American Providence Court, Judge Frank Caprio, does not seem like the hard-handed judge that others have shown themselves to be, though he is fair and judicious in his dealing with the defendants.

## 3. A Pragmatic Quintuple Rating Scale of Dialogic Civility

Dialogic civility is an integral part of everyday communication in any society. Whenever we interact with others, we choose how civil to be, ranging from being very civil to less civil. Thus, how civil we choose to be is context-dependent. It seems that there is a need to illuminate the way in which dialogic civility can be evaluated. Such evaluation can be done via a quintuple rating scale of dialogic civility offered by this study for this purpose. This scale can live and breathe via the use of some pragmatics

strategies. Importantly, language and civility are not accidentally associated. Contrarily, they are, as Carr (2011: 153) argues, intrinsically interconnected due to the fact that social structures and personal behaviours weave the linguistic fabrics of any phenomena. It is seriously important to note that language is the voice of dialogic civility and its golden means. At its core, dialogic civility is a matter of degree, and locating its appropriate degrees requires the balance of its scale of value. In the present study, dialogic civility is approached and treated as a continuum in terms of its rating scale of values. To form a standard system for measuring and grading dialogic civility, the present study suggests a close-ended scale; namely, a quintuple rating scale of dialogic civility. In this scale, dialogic civility is evaluated in terms of a vertical rating that goes from the most civil to the most uncivil evaluation of any dialogic exchanges, as indicated by the plus and minus signs respectively (See Figure 1). This scale offers the exact value of dialogic civility that makes a particular degree of civility seems appropriate in a given dialogic exchange and in a particular social setting. The rating scale of dialogic civility is a bidirectional and bipolar scale where one pole is civil and the other is not. In practice, maximum dialogic civility is used to describe the dialogic interaction that is oriented towards the positive end of the scale, and zero dialogic civility is used to describe the dialogic interaction that is oriented towards the negative end of the scale. Hence, utterances are coded on a quintuple rating scale of dialogic civility in the following way:

- **Maximum Dialogic Civility** is the highest level of a quintuple rating scale of dialogic civility that stands for the highest positive rating in the scale where utterances are described as very civil.
- **Intermediate Dialogic Civility** is lesser than maximum dialogic civility and greater than minimum dialogic civility.
- **Minimum Dialogic Civility** signifies the low rating of dialogic civility in the scale.
- **Neutral Dialogic Civility** is neither civil nor uncivil and it does not help or support either side on the rating scale.
- **Zero Dialogic Civility** or incivility can be an indication of the total absence of dialogic civility and the least degree in the scale where utterances are described as uncivil.

#### 4. Methodology

In this study, it is important to deal with the question: What kinds of pragmatic strategies can be brought to bear in order to realise maximum dialogic civility? Significantly, maximum dialogic civility is the maximum point on the scale and it is clear and explicit because it is easy to perceive, understand, or interpret. It does not include offensive language or clear negative effects. However, it is encouraged by acknowledging and inviting others' viewpoints even when the other side of the dialogic exchange is mistaken in terms of a particular standpoint. It can be pragmatically realised in terms of various pragmatic strategies. First, maximum dialogic civility is evident in the utilisation of expressive speech acts like greeting, thanking, well-wishing, praising, comforting, apologising, and deploring. Second, it can be given its pragmatic realisation by the observance of conversational maxims when interlocutors are informative, truthful, relevant, and perspicuous. Third, it can be put into practice by the strategies of on-record positive politeness including noticing the hearer's interests, exaggerating the hearer's interests, intensifying the hearer's interests, using in-group identify markers, seeking agreement and avoiding

disagreement, presupposing common ground, including both the speaker and the hearer in the activity, giving or asking for reasons, and giving gifts to the hearer. Fourth, maximum dialogic civility comes to the fore when argumentative patterns of claim, data, and warrant are workable to create a syllogistic argument. Fifth, maximum dialogic civility is apparent in using the persuasive appeal of ethos. Sixth, maximum dialogic civility can be ascertained by the persuasive appeal of logos. Seventh, it can be triggered by the use of the persuasive appeal of pathos. The eighth realisation of maximum dialogic civility, as a final point, can be revealed through formal address forms where formal titles like "sir" or honorific expressions like "Your Honor" are used to address interlocutors with power of high social status.

With respect to intermediate dialogic civility, it is an adequate, satisfactory, and acceptable degree that does not include offensive language. Pragmatically speaking, certain pragmatic strategies can manifest this rate. First, it can be accentuated by the felicitous performance of representative speech acts. Outstandingly, the representative speech acts that manifest the intermediate dialogic civility are stating, asserting, assuring, affirming, admitting, reporting, retrodicting, conjecturing, criticising, complaining, lamenting, and blaming. Second, intermediate dialogic civility can be obvious in the use of commissive speech acts of promising, offering, accepting, and consenting. Third, the intermediate dialogic civility can be portrayed through declarative speech acts of declaring the verdict, approving, and confirming. Fourth, non-observance of conversational maxims can be a remark about the workability of the intermediate dialogic civility. Fifth, strategies of on-record negative politeness can be indications of the intermediate dialogic civility including the strategies of being conventionally indirect, hedging, giving deference, and stating face-threatening acts as general rules.

Sixth, the intermediate dialogic civility can be demonstrated by means of the strategies of off-record politeness; namely, hints, presupposing, understatement, overstatement, using contradiction, and metaphor. Seventh, the intermediate dialogic civility can be marked by the strategy of strategic maneuvering as reflected in its three aspects of topical potential, audience demand, and presentational devices. Eighth, in drawing intermediate dialogic civility to a close, humour can also be another indication which is evident in humorous utterances using strategies of anecdote, humorous hint, wisecrack, non-hostile teasing, and self-deprecation.

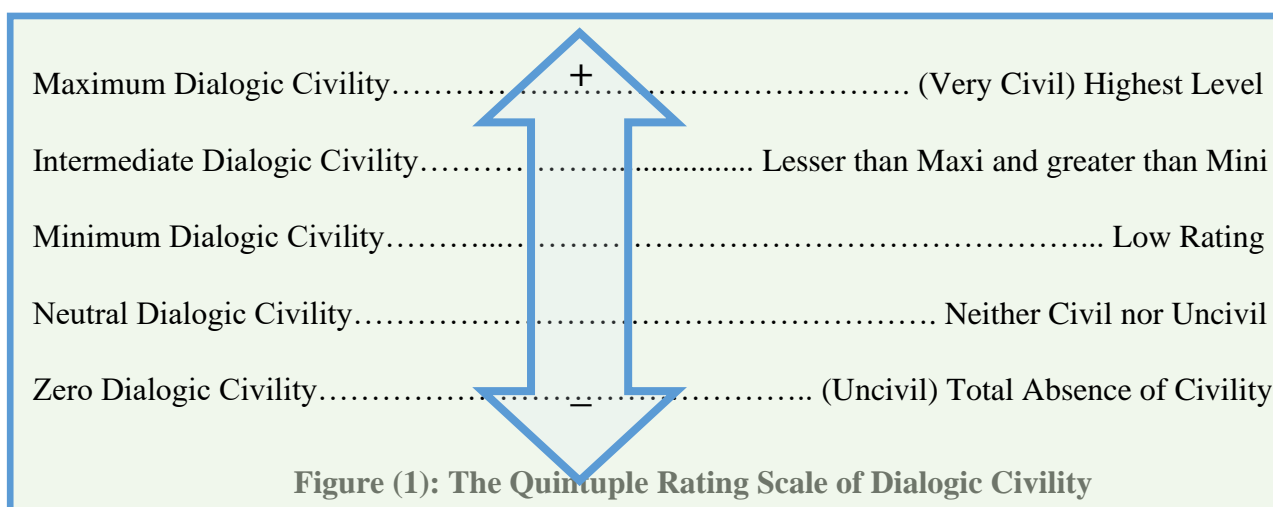
As far as minimum dialogic civility is concerned, it stands for the minimum point on the scale where three strategies are triggered to realise it. First, it is demonstrated in the use of directive speech acts of commanding, summoning, asking, requesting, suggesting, warning, and advising, when used by authoritative figures. Second, it can be indicated by very restricted types of directive speech acts, such as asking and requesting, when used by powerless or less powerful interlocutors. Third, it can be pragmatically conveyed by the strategy of bald-on record politeness.

With reference to neutral dialogic civility, when interlocutors' behaviours have tendencies towards the neutral territory, they can be evaluated as neither civil nor uncivil so that their behaviours will neither please nor offend other interlocutors since they do not support either side on the rating scale. Thus, neutral dialogic civility can take place when utterances are petered out into silence by interlocutors so that the degree of dialogic civility remains unspoken. Importantly, this rate of the scale does not necessarily equate silence with neutrality, but due to the fact that this study deals with verbal dialogic interaction, neutral dialogic civility is assumed to be connected with non-verbal interaction. At

the end of this scale, zero dialogic civility comes as the negative pole that represents the zero-point where incivility dwells. Basically, it is characterised by a lack of regard for others, rudeness, insults, and inflammatory language.

In this study, it has to be noted that dialogic civility is applied only to those utterances which are classified under the rubric of maximum dialogic civility, intermediate dialogic civility, and minimum dialogic civility, whereas those utterances that go under the headings of neutral dialogic civility and zero dialogic civility are not the subject to the analytical mechanism of dialogic civility. The reason is that this study does not deal with neutral or uncivil utterances so that neutral dialogic civility and zero dialogic civility are only identified, but they are excluded from further examination. Moreover, this rating scale of dialogic civility is relative rather than absolute because it is context-sensitive in the sense that dialogic civility is relative to the effects of social variables, social norms, social groups, social situations, and social settings. What is more, it should be noted that the more pragmatic strategies are employed by civil interlocutors, the stronger the rating scale of dialogic civility becomes.

Importantly, in this study, Searle's (1976) taxonomy is adapted due to its comprehensiveness to embrace all the speech acts that are expected to be exploited in the data under scrutiny and due to the fact that his taxonomy is an exhaustive taxonomy that is apt to classify and include every possible speech act in dialogic interactions. The scale also embraces Paul Grice's (1975) view of conversational maxims. It also benefits from Brown's and Levinson's (1987) because of its appropriateness in relation to dialogic civility and to the target data as it offers a thorough framework that covers various linguistic resources which can be employed to signal politeness in face-to-face interactions. Toulmin's (2003) delicate layout of arguments is also adopted with its six argumentative patterns; namely, the claim, data, warrant, backing, rebuttal, and qualifiers. Moreover, the scale includes the concept of strategic maneuvering as suggested by Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002: 135) with its three aspects which topical potential, audience demand, and presentational devices. In addition, it embraces Aristotle's persuasive appeals of ethos, logos, and pathos. Figure (1) below simply depicts the quintuple rating scale of dialogic civility suggested by this study:



## 5. Analysis and Results

This study seeks legal situations where interlocutors are civilly engaged in an institutionalised interaction. The data of this study are represented by twenty trials taken from the context of the American Providence Court. They are randomly collected from their top official websites and they are found in form of videos taken and transcribed by the researchers. Due to their fame, these videos are well documented on sundry social media channels. Basically, the target data are oral and, thus, they represent real-world actual legal cases that can be considered as natural, reliable, and authentic sources for the analysis of dialogic civility because one of the peculiarities of pragmatics is that it calls for data collected in real-world contexts of language use.

In this study, the developed pragmatic quintuple rating scale of dialogic civility is applied to the context of the American Providence Court which can be considered as the best legal context in which dialogic civility takes place where dialogic exchange reaches its highest level of dialogic civility. In other words, the American Providence Court is a unique legal context that must be taken seriously. It is a municipal traffic court in the city of Providence in the state of Rhode Island in the United States that deals with traffic violations such as parking, speeding, or red-light violations that can be considered as low-level traffic crimes. Some traffic cases imply dramatic events which bring defendants to tears. Other cases are really funny which bring laughter. Judge Caprio, who is best known for his civility and compassion, is the Chief Judge of American Providence Court in Rhode Island. He is a member of Rhode Island Judiciary who pledges to conduct in a civil manner in his legal profession so that dialogic civility can be salient in his dialogic exchange with the defendants. Lucidly, the intrinsic intention behind using dialogic civility by defendants is to win a verbal victory by impressing and persuading the judge of their arguments.

Rosulek (2015: 172) observes that in courtroom settings, there are certain standards of how interlocutors, i.e. the judge and the defendants behave, among which interlocutors are expected to communicate with a kind of civility and respect towards each other. In this way, one of the best contexts in which dialogic civility takes place is the context of American Providence Court that can be more civilly regulated than other contexts. Hence, dialogic civility in the American Providence Court is inescapable and to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no attempt has yet made a systematic study of the praxis of dialogic civility in this legal context. Thus, this study has set itself this kind of task.

In terms of the overall analysis of the rating scale of dialogic civility, maximum dialogic civility, which is the maximum point on the scale, has the highest percentage that amounts to (57.09%) which indicates that the context of the American Providence Court is the best matching context in which dialogic civility takes place. Intermediate dialogic civility records the second rate with the percentage of (35.85%). Minimum dialogic civility scores the least percentage of (7.06%). Table (1) statistically illuminates such findings more plainly.

**Table (1): Overall Analysis of the Rating Scale of Dialogic Civility**

Rating Scale of Dialogic Civility	Total Number	
	F	%
Maximum Dialogic Civility	1901	57.09



Intermediate Dialogic Civility	1194	35.85
Minimum Dialogic Civility	235	7.06
<b>Total Number</b>	<b>3330</b>	<b>100</b>

In terms of comparison between Judge Caprio and the defendants as far as the rating scale of dialogic civility is concerned, maximum dialogic civility scores the highest rate that amounts to (57.09%), whereas intermediate dialogic civility comes second with (35.85%), and finally minimum dialogic civility scores the lowest percentage that amounts to (7.06%). As for maximum dialogic civility, Judge Caprio scores (56.39%), whereas defendants score (43.61%). Then, defendants score the highest percentage of the use of intermediate dialogic civility with the percentage of (73.95%), whereas Judge Caprio scores only (26.05%). Next, minimum dialogic civility is highly used by Judge Caprio with a percentage of (89.79%), whereas the defendants with (10.21%). Such indicative differences between Judge Caprio and the American defendants in terms of the rating scale of dialogic civility prove the validity of the view that there are significant differences between the Chief Judge and the defendants in terms of the employment of dialogic civility in the American Providence Court. The most basic difference is that the Chief Judge prefers those manifestations of dialogic civility that reflect his power and justice. Table (2) below gives more statistical insights into this scale.

**Table (2): Statistical Comparison in Terms of the Rating Scale of Dialogic Civility**

Rating Scale of Dialogic Civility	Judge Caprio		Defendants		Total Number	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Maximum Dialogic Civility	1072	56.39	829	43.61	1901	57.09
Intermediate Dialogic Civility	311	26.05	883	73.95	1194	35.85
Minimum Dialogic Civility	211	89.79	24	10.21	235	7.06
<b>Total Number</b>	<b>1594</b>	<b>47.87</b>	<b>1736</b>	<b>52.13</b>	<b>3330</b>	<b>100</b>

Also, the statistical tool of One-Sample Test is conducted. Table (3) clearly shows noticeable and statistically valuable differences between Judge Caprio and the defendants in terms of the various manifestations of dialogic civility on the developed scale. The statistical analysis of One-Sample Test depends on the statistics of the pragmatic strategies used by Judge Caprio and the defendants. As such, there is a serious mismatch in terms of the use of different manifestations of dialogic civility by Judge Caprio and the defendants. The statistical analysis shows that the level of Sig counts as (0.000) which is very highly significant as it is less the standard Sig that counts (0.05). Thus, the statistical comparison of One-Sample Test authenticates the eleventh hypothesis.

**Table (3): One-Sample Test Statistical Comparison between Judge Caprio and Defendants**

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 0.05					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Value	4.587	15	0.000	208.07500	111.3904	304.7596

## 6. Conclusion

The pragmatic quintuple rating scale of dialogic civility demonstrates its value, as confirmed in the evaluation phase of the model, because it offers the exact value of dialogic civility that makes it appropriate in a given dialogic exchange and in a particular social setting. Maximum dialogic civility, which is the maximum point on the scale, proves to be the highest rate on the scale and this view indicates that the context of American Providence Court is the best matching context in which dialogic civility takes place. Maximum dialogic civility can be realised in terms of expressive speech acts, observance of conversational maxims, strategies of on-record positive politeness, argumentative patterns, the persuasive appeals of ethos and pathos, and formal address forms. Intermediate dialogic civility is achieved by means of representative speech acts, commissive speech acts, declarative speech acts, non-observance of conversational maxims, strategies of on-record negative politeness, strategies of off-record politeness, strategic maneuvering, and humorous strategies. Minimum dialogic civility triggers directive speech acts and bald-on record politeness. Neutral dialogic civility and zero dialogic civility prove to be out of the analytical mechanism of dialogic civility as they deal with neutral or uncivil utterances respectively which are out of the scope of this study. This scale can be an evaluation and a pragmatic indication of the degree of dialogic civility in a particular exchange and this evaluation can accurately be determined via a quantitative statistical analysis. Obviously, according to this scale, there is a continuum of behaviours with labels from "very civil" to "uncivil" to represent the highest level of dialogic civility to its total absence respectively. To this end, the data can be evaluated as having maximum dialogic civility, intermediate dialogic civility, minimum dialogic civility, neutral dialogic civility, and zero dialogic civility.

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