

Klára SÁNDOR

On the Razor's Edge – Blogging Politicians

The development of communicational technology in the 20th century has transported public life into private life. We are watching presidential speeches and real wars sitting on our couch, having a cup of coffee meanwhile. This process has led to the mediatization of politics. The traditional ways of political behavior were overwritten by the omnipotence of media sensitivity. A new genre, infotainment, has developed, and the spin doctors of the last few decades were wondering how to present politicians as private persons to gain more popularity and, first of all, more votes.

In the new, networked society, anyone can be a “star”. Anyone can build herself a website, anyone can publish his photos, videos, and writings on the web. The evolution of Web.2 made the earlier one-way mass communication desperately interactive. The new form of self-express in the interactive, networked, mediatized society, is the blog: spreading like a wildfire.

The blog, being a diary, is par excellence the most personal part of private life. The activity of a leading politician is par excellence a central part of public life. What happens if the two are interconnected? What benefits do politicians hope from blogging? How deep they allow the public to step into their private lives? Is blogging only beneficial or is it risky as well? Do we want political leaders who open their family house doors wide to us, or do we want them to be more than just a boy or girl from the neighboring door? This paper is an attempt to answer these questions.

Klára SÁNDOR is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Szeged, Member of the Hungarian National Assembly, Vice Chair of the Committee on Education and Science, and Member of the Assembly of the European Council. She has lead several research projects, including "From Stigmatization to Tolerance" (1998–1999), and "The Cognitive Embeddedness of Linguistic Value Judgments" (2000–2003). Her research fields are evolutionary linguistics, including the effects of ITC on language, the sociology of language, especially linguistic stereotypes and discrimination, as well as language and gender, and language and politics. Her many published papers include: "National Feeling or Responsibility: The Case of the Csángó Language Revitalization", *Multilingua*, vol. 19, nos. 1–2 (2000); "The Fall of Linguistic Aristocracy", in Kristóf Nyíri (ed.), *Mobile Communication: Essays on Cognition and Community*, Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2003. E-mail: sandor.klara@hung.u-szeged.hu.

