

## **Power and impoliteness in Hancock action movie**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examined the strategies employed by the main character in the Hancock movie named John Hancock to attack his interlocutors' face, the way the recipients responded to his impoliteness, and how he used impoliteness to exercise his power. By using content analysis to draw inferences from utterances in the movie transcript, the study found that positive impoliteness is the most frequent strategy used by Hancock due to its abusive nature and withhold impoliteness is the least used due to its unlikeliness to damage the interlocutor's face. Also, the study found that the recipients used all strategies to respond to Hancock's impoliteness, except abrogation and dismissing. At the same time, apart from Hancock's use of impoliteness to exercise power, such as to appear as superior, to get power over actions, and to dominate the conversation as Beebe (1995) noted, this study found that silence is also a way to exercise power to maintain control of undesired situations. The finding adds substantially to our understanding that silence as an impoliteness strategy might also serve the purpose of exercising power. This, of course, is open to debate and further research would verify or contradict this claim.

**Keywords:** *Power; Impoliteness; Hancock action movie*

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## 1. Introduction

The concept of politeness strategy emphasizes the importance of someone respecting other people's faces during communication. Failing to do so, then s/he will be considered rude or impolite. Although Brown and Levinson (1987) do not claim that rudeness and impoliteness the same or different, Culpeper (2008) argues rudeness is different from impoliteness in the sense that rudeness is unintentional while impoliteness is intentional. This distinction motivates Culpeper to put forth the impoliteness theory. Succinctly, impoliteness is defined as the act of the speaker's face-attacking the hearer intentionally, and the act is perceived by the hearer as "intentionally face-attacking" (Culpeper & Hardaker, 2017, p. 203).

Culpeper, Bousfield, and Wichmann (2003) divide impoliteness into bald, on record impoliteness (BORI), positive impoliteness (PI), negative impoliteness (NI), sarcasm/mock politeness (SMP), and withhold politeness (WP). BORI occurs when someone attacks the recipient's face directly, clearly, and unambiguously. PI is designed to damage the recipient's positive face by using taboo words or inappropriate identity markers or making others uncomfortable. NI occurs when the speaker damages the recipient's negative face by frightening, threatening, associating with negative things, or blocking physically or linguistically. SMP occurs when someone uses politeness insincerely. As for WP, it occurs when someone fails to perform the expected politeness (Culpeper & Hardaker, 2017).

In order to build effective communication, one must pay attention to the role of both interlocutors. Therefore, the study of impoliteness needs also to examine the reaction of the recipient to the impoliteness. Culpeper et al. (2003) state that the recipients may respond or not to respond to the impoliteness. While not to respond to impoliteness is rarely found, people are given the option of whether to accept or to counter when they choose to respond to the impoliteness. Culpeper and Hardaker (2017) explain that to accept the impoliteness the recipient may use strong and personalized complaints involving "increased face damage" to the recipients, (e.g., A: "You're stupid", B: "You're right. I'm a bit of a dim-wit"). While to respond to the impoliteness, the recipient may choose either to offend (e.g., A: "You're stupid", B: "You're idiot") or to defend (e.g., A: "You're stupid", B: "No, I am not. I have got a PhD ...").

Many factors can trigger impoliteness, one of which is the imbalance of power (Baider, Cislaru, & Claudel, 2020; Kienpointner, 2008; Yibifu, 2020). Bousfield (2008) argues that impoliteness is a way to "exercise power." This idea supports what Brown and Levinson (1987), as cited in Spencer-Oatey and Žegarac (2017), predict that the more power a person has, the more politeness he might receive. Furthermore, impoliteness is closely related to power in a way that someone whose face is attacked by others; the only thing that prevents him from responding to it is power. Strong individuals may need less effort to make their voices heard by the other person, but the "marginalized" individual may need to use harsh and disrespectful speech to make

himself visible (Sifianou, 2019, p. 56). Furthermore, Culpeper and Terkourafi (2017, p. 29) argue that power “regulate[s] the degree of [im]politeness appropriate to the performance of a face-threatening act.”

Bousfield's (2008) study in an army setting points out two functions of impoliteness to exercise power: to emphasize power and to reactivate power by people with high power over people with low power. The speaker uses impolite words to emphasize his/her power hierarchy in order to show who is the superordinate and the subordinate participant in the conversation. This function appears when the speaker uses BORI to indicate the power hierarchy. Impoliteness functions as a power-reactivating strategy that aims to scold the less powerful hearer and to clarify the meaning behind the discourse used by the hearer. The use of sarcasm is an example of impoliteness to reactivate power (Ratri & Ardi, 2019). Different from Bousfield (2008), who took the data from the conversation in an army setting in which the distinction between high and low power is noticeable, Beebe (1995) used the data taken from daily conversations in which high and low power distinction is unlikely noticeable. Beebe (1995) claims that impoliteness as an exercise of power could be used by people to show their superiority by insulting or putting down, gain authority by making others do something or avoid doing something, and show their dominance in a conversation.

Since its establishment, the theory of impoliteness has invited many researchers to study it in various conversation settings and media, such as movies (Dafiqi, Sukarno, & Wahyuningsih, 2016; Ratri & Ardi, 2019; Rosa, 2017). As the movie is “a recording of moving images that tells a story” (“Movie”, n.d.) from which we get shown real-life like communication in the society by the characters (Isna, 2018; Rizki & Golubović, 2020; Spiker, 2012), it may reflect the impoliteness in the conversation, how the impoliteness is taken by the recipients, and, further, how power is reflected in the impoliteness used by the speaker.

This study aims at analyzing impoliteness strategies in an action movie entitled *Hancock*. Different from other studies that investigated impoliteness in the movie by taking utterances of several characters (Dafiqi, et al., 2016; Ratri & Ardi, 2019; Rosa, 2017), this study took utterances which include impoliteness used by the main character only, named John Hancock. By taking the utterances of the main or a single character, a clear picture of how power might contribute to the use of impoliteness by a certain speaker as an exercise of his power can be revealed. Also, this study examined how the recipients respond to the main character's impoliteness. Hence, the power relationship between speakers can be clearly and genuinely seen.

Based on the background of the study above, this research seeks to answer the following research problems: (i) What impoliteness strategies were used by John Hancock? (ii) How do the recipients respond to John Hancock's impoliteness? and (iii) In what ways does John Hancock use impoliteness to exercise his power?

## **2. Literature review**

### *2.1. Impoliteness*

Impoliteness is “communicative strategies designed to attack the face, and cause social quarrelling and disharmony” (Culpeper, et al., 2003, p. 1546). Culpeper divides impoliteness into five types: bald, on-record impoliteness (BORI), positive impoliteness (PI), negative impoliteness (NI), sarcasm/mock politeness (SMP), and withhold politeness (WP). BORI occurs when someone attacks someone else’s face directly with no intention of minimizing the face attacks. This type of strategy is typically found in imperative sentences, such as “Stop talking and finish your meal.” PI occurs when a speaker uses face attacks to gain respect, such as the use of ignoring others, using inappropriate identity marker, using taboo words, being disinterested, or making others uncomfortable. The examples of PI are the use of taboo words, such as “What the hell are you looking at?” or the use of inappropriate identify markers, such as “What are you doing here, piggy?” NI occurs when someone uses words “designed to damage the addressee’s negative face wants.” This strategy involves frightening, condescending, ridiculing, and blocking others either physically or linguistically. SMP is “a face-threatening act which is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere.” Someone is considered performing this strategy is when he uses the politeness act, but it is performed insincerely. WP occurs when someone fails to perform the expected politeness act, such as failing to say thank you is considered impolite (Culpeper & Hardaker, 2017, p. 208-209).

### *2.2. Strategies to counter impoliteness*

It is natural that both speakers and hearers tend to maintain self-face during communication. While maintaining good and effective communication can benefit both parties, a conflict in communication is inevitable, especially when one of the interlocutors feels provoked that makes him/her use impolite utterances or face attacks. This situation might lead to the conflict spiral that the response to the face attacks could trigger a new offending situation that is, possibly, responded to (Kaul de Marlangeon, 2019). Theoretically, someone whose face is attacked has two choices in response to the face attacks, respond or not to respond. While not to respond to the face attacks is rarely found in the data of impoliteness studies, to respond to the face attack, the recipient of the face attack has two choices either to accept or to counter (Culpeper et al., 2003; Culpeper, 2005; Culpeper & Hardaker, 2017). In accepting the face attacks, the recipients might remain silent to avoid further face damage, while in countering the face attacks the recipients challenge the impoliteness as a kind to retaliate and restore the face damage.

Countering the impoliteness involves offensive and defensive strategy. Offensive strategy means the use of face attack in response to face attack. This strategy includes the use of a stronger statement than the face attacks or escalation and repeating the previous speaker’s impolite statements. Defensive strategy means the use of a

counter statement by the recipients of the face attack to defend their face. The first defensive strategy is the use of contradicting utterances to the face attacks (inversion), such as when a person said, “You are stupid,” the recipients used contradictions, such as, “I am NOT stupid.” The second strategy to defend the face attack is refusing to take responsibility for the offence (abrogation), such as, “I’m not to blame, *I’m just following orders!*” The third defensive strategy is treating the face attack as insignificant, such as using jokes in response to the face attacks. The fourth strategy is offering an insincere agreement, such as, “Yeah. Yeah. *You’re all right.*” The fifth defensive strategy is the recipient of the face attack opts out of the conversation, “Well. *I am not saying anything. I am making no further comment.*” The last defensive strategy is ignoring the implied face attacks or the recipients do not regard the impoliteness as face attacks.

### 2.3. Power and impoliteness

Impoliteness is frequently associated with the exercise of power (Bousfield, 2008; Yibifu, 2020). It is widely believed that the more powerful a person is, s/he likely has more opportunities to receive politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and the degree of power is significantly contributing to the strategy of impoliteness used (Yibifu, 2020). Also, the more powerful the speaker is the higher tendency that s/he is impolite because they have more chances to subordinate others who are less powerful (Culpeper, 2005; Marlangeon, 2019). As a result, people with low/less power tend to lose their face and will likely accept or counter to the more powerful speaker’s attacks.

Bousfield (2008) noted two purposes of someone performing impoliteness associated with the exercise of power, namely to reemphasize power and to reactivate the power. To reemphasize power means the more powerful speaker uses impoliteness to show his existence and power over the less powerful participant. To reactivate power, the more powerful participant uses impoliteness to reprimand other participants due to the unexpected behavior (Ratri & Ardi, 2019). A little bit different from Bousfield (2008) who used the conversations in the army setting in which the distinction between high and low power is noticeable, Beebe (1995), using the conversation in daily context as the data, mentioned three functions of impoliteness as the exercise of power. The first purpose is to appear as superior. More power speaker often wants to appear as a superior; therefore, they often use impoliteness, such as insulting and putting down others, as an exercise of their power. The second purpose is to get power over actions, such as by getting someone to do something or making someone not do something. The third purpose is to dominate the conversation, such as by using conversational management, i.e., to interrupt the conversation, make someone talk, stop someone talking, or hold the floor.

### 3. Method

This research employed a qualitative method as it is more concerned with understanding a phenomenon holistically by focusing on words to get answers (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). This study used content analysis to draw inferences about the impoliteness, the ways how impoliteness was taken by the recipients, and the use of impoliteness as an exercise of power from the transcription of recorded materials. In line with Krippendorff (2004), content analysis is appropriate to “make replicable and valid inferences from text (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use” (p. 18).

The present study used the transcript of the *Hancock* movie downloaded from [http://www/script-o-rama.com/movie\\_scripts/a2/hancock-script-transcript-will-smith.html](http://www/script-o-rama.com/movie_scripts/a2/hancock-script-transcript-will-smith.html) as the data source. The movie tells about Hancock, who is immortal, powerful and possesses incredible strength and the ability to fly fast. Hancock suffers from amnesia, and no one can help him unveil his identity, which results in his madness to the world and frequently causes damages when doing his heroic actions. For this, he is often mocked and disfavoured by the public.

The data were collected by reading the transcript of the movie which was previously downloaded, watching the movie to ensure that the utterances in the transcript are the same as in the movie, highlighting on utterances which reflect impoliteness and also the responses of the impoliteness, and collecting those utterances and recording them into datasheets.

After the data were collected, the researchers carefully reinvestigated the data to avoid unnecessary and mistaken data. Then, the data were coded by giving brackets in the utterances indicating impoliteness and the recipients' response following Culpeper's impoliteness strategies and strategies to counter impoliteness (Culpeper et al., 2003). The codes for impoliteness strategies were BORI (bald, on record impoliteness), PI (positive impoliteness), NI (negative impoliteness), SMP (sarcasm/ mock politeness), and WP (withhold politeness). As for the strategies of the recipients to counter impoliteness were coded as OE (offensive-escalation), OR (offensive-repetition), DI (defensive-inversion), DA (defensive-abrogation), DOR (defensive-opt-out-record), DIA (defensive-insincere agreement), DIF (defensive-ignore the implied face attack) (Culpeper, 2005). Third, the researchers conducted a focus group discussion involving three senior English lecturers in an Islamic university in East Java to check on the results of the research and to get feedback for necessary revision. This process aimed at ensuring the data that would be interpreted is valid and free from mistakes. Fourth, the researchers presented the findings in the form of narratives, and the last step is to interpret the data to answer the research questions that were already formulated.

## 4. Findings and discussion

### 4.1. Impoliteness in Hancock action movie

This section provides the answer to the first research question about what impoliteness strategies used by Hancock. This study found that Hancock used Culpeper's five types of impoliteness strategies. The words containing impoliteness are written in bold, and the responses are in italic.

**Table 1**

Types of impoliteness used by John Hancock.

No	Types of strategies	Frequency
1.	Bald, on-record	3
2.	Positive impoliteness	24
3.	Negative impoliteness	4
4.	Sarcasm/mock politeness	4
5.	Withhold politeness	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>37</b>

The researchers found 33 of Hancock's utterances containing impoliteness. However, it should be noted that this study found four (4) utterances containing multiple strategies in each. Consequently, each different strategy contained in the single utterance is considered worthy of counting individually and made up 37 impoliteness data altogether.

#### 4.1.1. Bald, on-record impoliteness

Bald, on-record impoliteness occurs when impoliteness occurs simultaneously with coercion as a politeness strategy. It is done to damage the recipient's face without any intention to cover up feelings (Culpeper et al., 2003). Excerpt 1 and 2 are the examples of bald, on-record impoliteness used by Hancock.

Excerpt 1

BOY : "Bad guys."  
 HANCOCK : "**What you want a cookie? Get out of my face.**"  
 BOY : "*Asshole.*"  
 (00:01:53-00:02:22)

Excerpt 1 tells about Hancock, who was sleeping in a public place suddenly awakened by a child showing him police pursuit of criminals aired on television. Hancock said, "Get out of my face." The use of direct, clear, and unambiguous language as such is considered a strategy of bald-on record impoliteness (Culpeper et al., 2003).

Excerpt 2

HANCOCK : "**Oh stop crying punk-ass. Go ahead.**"

RAY : “Not okay. Okay?”  
(00:27:25-00:27:48)

Excerpt 2 tells about Michel crying after Hancock threw him into the air because of calling him “asshole”. When the kid was falling, Hancock managed to get him and told him to stop crying. The researchers noted that Hancock used taboo words, “punk-ass,” which is a strategy of doing positive impoliteness in addition to two command utterances, “stop crying” and “go ahead”. The use of repeated and multiple strategies seems to function to increase the level of impoliteness and, consequently, damages the interlocutor’s face even worse (Culpeper et al., 2003; Hammod & Abdul-Rassul, 2017).

#### 4.1.2. Positive impoliteness

Positive impoliteness occurs when the speaker intends to damage the interlocutor’s positive face by ignoring, dissociating, snubbing, excluding the interlocutor from an activity, the use of taboo words, and using inappropriate identity markers (Culpeper et al., 2003). The positive impoliteness used by Hancock is shown in excerpt 3 and 4.

#### Excerpt 3

AARON : “Why do you have an eagle on your hat? Do you like eagles?”  
HANCOCK : “**This guy’s like a little talking machine huh?**”  
RAY : “*We don’t have a lot of guests over here.*”  
(00:18:44-00:19:24)

Excerpt 3 tells about Hancock being invited to join Ray’s family dinner. During the dinner, Aaron asked Hancock many questions. Feeling disturbed, Hancock called him a “talking machine”. Using inappropriate identity markers may not be considered as impoliteness when it occurs between people with a close relationship; however, it will be considered impolite when occurring between people with a distant relationship (Culpeper, 2005; Culpeper & Terkourafi, 2017).

#### Excerpt 4

MARY: “This is hard to explain.”  
RAY : “Great I’m all ears.”  
HANCOCK : “**Me too.**”  
RAY : “*Do me a favour just give me and my wife one moment.*”  
(01:15:51-01:15:58)

Excerpt 4 tells about Ray witnessing his wife, Mary, destroying the city of Los Angeles. When she was back home, Ray wanted to hear Mary’s explanation of the incident. In the middle of the conversation, Hancock interrupted their conversation by

saying, “Me too,” making Ray feel uncomfortable. Hancock’s utterance aiming at interrupting conversations is a strategy of positive impoliteness (Culpeper et al., 2003).

Among other strategies, this study found that positive impoliteness is the most frequent one used by Hancock. This finding seems to confirm the findings of the previous works (Dafiqi et al., 2016; Ratri & Ardi, 2019; Rosa, 2017) that positive impoliteness is common impoliteness strategies found in movies because of its abusive and direct nature, and their effects are more damaging to the interlocutor’s face.

#### 4.1.3. Negative impoliteness

Someone is performing negative impoliteness when he is damaging people’s negative face by frightening, condescending, not treating others seriously, invading others’ space, or associating others with negative things (Culpeper et al., 2003).

Excerpt 5

HANCOCK : **“If you don’t pull over and give yourselves up quietly... I swear to Christ your head is going up the driver’s ass. His head is going up your ass. And you drew the short stick... because your head is going up my ass.”**

VILLAIN : *“Shoot this asshole!”*

(00:04:01-00:04:31)

Excerpt 5 tells about Hancock trying to stop the criminals who were being chased by the police. With his ability to fly, Hancock managed to chase the criminal’s car, destroyed the rear car, and sat in the back seat. Hancock threatened them if they did not stop the car and surrender to the police; they would be beaten up. The use of such threatening utterances is considered as a negative impoliteness (Culpeper et al., 2003).

Excerpt 6

HANCOCK : **“That is a lie.”**

MARY : *“No. I’m your sister.”*

HANCOCK : **“That is a lie.”**

MARY : *“I’m your sister.”*

HANCOCK : **“That is a lie. Sisters don’t kiss brothers the way you kissed me last night. You’re lying deals off. Let’s go see how Ray feels about this”.**

(01:10:20-01:10:34)

Excerpt 6 tells about after Mary kissed Hancock, she told him that they are brother and sister. However, Hancock did not believe in and denied Mary’s statement repeatedly, noting that a sister did not kiss a brother like a lover. Hancock forced Mary to tell the truth about what their relationship was. He threatened her to tell the kissing

incident to Ray and invading Mary's space by telling that she was lying. The use of threatening words is a sub-strategy of negative impoliteness (Culpeper et al., 2003).

#### 4.1.4. Sarcasm/mock politeness

Sarcasm/mock politeness occurs when someone performs the considered-polite acts, but it is insincerely performed (Culpeper et al., 2003). The sarcasm/mock politeness used by Hancock is shown in excerpt 7 and 8.

##### Excerpt 7

HANCOCK : "Huh? **You want down?**"

VILLAIN : "*Yes please! Please! Help me!*"

HANCOCK : "**I'm real good at down. I'm real good at down. Alright? Alright.**"

(00:05:37-00:05:45)

Excerpt 7 tells about Hancock managing to catch the criminals who tried to escape from the police pursuit. He took their car into the air to frighten them. They were scared and asked Hancock to bring them down. Hancock agreed to bring them down, but implicitly he did not intend to. He stuck the car in a tower of a skyscraper building. The use of insincere polite utterance is a sub-strategy of mock politeness (Culpeper et al., 2003).

##### Excerpt 8

HANCOCK : "**All right. You're all right. You're all right. You're all right.**"

MICHEL : (CRYING)

RAY : "*Not okay. Okay?*"

HANCOCK : "**He all right.**"

RAY : "*Really not okay.*"

(00:27:25-00:27:48)

Excerpt 8 tells about Hancock angry with a kid named Michel. Hancock threw the kid into the air for calling him "asshole", and when the kid fell, Hancock managed to catch him. The kid was crying, and Hancock said, "You're all right." In this context, Hancock did not intend to appease the kid to make him stop crying. Instead, he mocked the kid that he was fine, and there was no need to cry. This insincere utterance to implicitly deny something is a sub-strategy of mock politeness (Culpeper et al., 2003).

#### 4.1.5. Withhold politeness

Withhold politeness occurs when someone fails to perform the expected politeness, such as failing to say thanks. Excerpt 9 and 10 are examples of withholding politeness.

##### Excerpt 9

RAY : “Perfect. E-mail me or whatever. You just fly on over I don’t know. I want you to think about it. Just be careful when you go. Sleep on it all right? You get back to me? I’ll be right here. All right. Please don’t stare you guys. He’s kind of one of us.”

HANCOCK : **(silent)**

MARY : “What about AllHeart?”

RAY : “*It’s a nonstarter babe you know? I’m chasing windmills with that.*”

(00:22:19-00:22:53)

Excerpt 9 tells about Ray defending Hancock in return the favour to Hancock for saving him from a train collision. Ray told the people that Hancock could be a hero for the city because he has a superpower. However, instead of thanking Ray as an act of politeness, he deliberately remained silent. This expression is considered impolite because Hancock failed or avoided to perform the expected politeness. The use of deliberate ignorance is a sub-strategy of withhold politeness.

##### Excerpt 10

RAY : “Eight is more like four and a half with good behavior. But it’s irrelevant because with you out of the picture... and with the crime rate going up through the roof... the DA and the cops they’re all gonna call for your immediate release. They’re gonna demand it.

HANCOCK : **(silent)**

RAY : “*What are you doing? Sit down.*”

(00:36:13-00:36:35)

Excerpt 10 tells about Ray offering help to increase Hancock’s public image. Rather than to say thanks for being helped to gain public acceptance and respect, Hancock remained silent and left the conversation. It seemed that Ray’s statement is not relevant to what Hancock’s feeling of being disrespected by the people so far. Failing to perform the expected politeness (i.e., saying thank you) is a sub-strategy of withhold politeness.

Found to occur twice in the data, withhold politeness is the least frequent impoliteness strategies. This finding, confirming what Ratri and Ardi (2019) reported that withhold impoliteness is the least frequently used a strategy of impoliteness, suggests that withhold impoliteness, which can only be found in face-to-face interaction so that it will not be found in written discourse (Hammod & Abdul-Rassul, 2017), also seems to be rarely found in spoken discourse (e.g., movie) because it is unlikely to damage the interlocutor's face.

#### 4.2. Recipients' strategies to Hancock's impoliteness

This section provides the answer for research question 2 of how the recipients respond to Hancock's impoliteness. Much of the studies on impoliteness have focused on the impoliteness itself but rarely pay attention to how the interlocutors respond to it. Whereas studying the ways the recipient of the impoliteness is also important to look at how impoliteness is "to be taken" (Culpeper et al., 2003) and possibly the way it is responded (or not to be responded) can reveal the relationship between interlocutors. While recipients may respond to the impoliteness by either accepting or countering it, this study did not find the data mentioning that the recipients did not respond to and accept the impoliteness. It is possible because "retaliation" to the impoliteness is natural in daily conversation, especially between people with equal power and distant relationship (Dyner, 2015; Culpeper & Terkourafi, 2017).

Culpeper et al. (2003) state that there are two ways in responding to the impoliteness: offensive and defensive. Offensive strategies include escalation and repetition, while defensive strategy includes the use of inversion, abrogation, opt-out or covering the face, offering an insincere agreement, ignoring the implied impoliteness, and dismissing or making light of the face damage. In this study, all of Hancock's impoliteness was responded by the recipients offensively and defensively. However, not all defensive strategies were found to be used, such as abrogation and dismissing, as shown in table 2.

**Table 2**

The strategies recipients used to counter Hancock's impoliteness.

No	Types of strategies to counter the impoliteness	Frequency
1.	Escalation	12
2.	Repetition	5
3.	Inversion	6
4.	Opt-out	4
5.	Insincere agreement	2
6.	Ignoring the implied face attacks	4
7.	Abrogation	0
8.	Dismiss	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>33</b>

The discussion of the recipients' strategies to respond to Hancock's impoliteness is based on the excerpts in the previous discussion of impoliteness. It is considered essential because using the same selected data may give a clear description of how each impoliteness is taken by the recipients rather than using different data. The recipients' responses toward Hancock's impoliteness are written in italic.

#### 4.2.1. *Offensive strategy*

An offensive strategy is to counter impoliteness with impoliteness (Culpeper et al., 2003). This strategy includes using stronger utterances than the previous speaker's and repeating the previous speaker's statements to offend. In excerpt 1, 5, and 6, the recipients used offensive strategies to counter Hancock's impoliteness.

In excerpt 1, the recipient (boy) responded to Hancock's impoliteness by calling him "asshole". This response is much stronger than Hancock's impoliteness "Get out of my face". The use of taboo words by the boy indicates the impolite belief that Hancock has no intelligence at all, even if he is older than him. This impolite belief, consequently, triggers him to offend Hancock even stronger. When people conflict with others, they may end up escalating it using more aversive and damaging ways to fuel up the conflict and might prevent resolution (Kennedy & Pronin, 2012).

In excerpt 5, the recipients (criminals) also use more face-threatening utterances to counter Hancock's impoliteness. When Hancock made the criminals stop the car by threatening them, one of them said, "Shoot this asshole." This response to the impoliteness sounds stronger or more impolite than the utterances Hancock used to threaten the villains.

In addition to using stronger utterances to respond to impoliteness, another offensive strategy used by the recipient is using repetition to offend Hancock, as shown in excerpt 6. The italicized words in excerpt 6 are an example of using repetition to offend in response to Hancock's impoliteness. In that excerpt, Mary repeated her utterance, "I'm your sister" to offend Hancock's statement, "It's a lie". Culpeper et al. (2003) noted that the use of repeating the other speaker's impolite words is a feature of an offensive strategy to counter impoliteness. However, this study also noted that not only does repeating others' utterance indicate an offensive strategy in dealing with impoliteness, self-repetition also indicates conflict intensification. Holmes and Stubbe (2015) mention that self-repetition can "turn up the heat" in a conversation and may intensify the coercion of others to do what is expected. Therefore, the use of self-repetition is also a kind of offensive strategy to counter impoliteness.

#### 4.2.2. *Defensive strategy*

In addition to using offensive strategy in dealing with impoliteness, recipients may also use defensive strategy by defending their face, for example by providing contradictions to the impoliteness, refusing to the personal responsibility of the offense (abrogation), covering the face by making the impoliteness as insignificant, dismissing

(i.e., using jokes), offering an insincere agreement, and ignoring the implied impoliteness (Culpeper et al., 2003). This study found that the recipients of Hancock's impoliteness used all defensive strategies, except abrogation and dismissing. In excerpt 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, and 10, we are provided with examples of how recipients use defensive strategy in response to Hancock's impoliteness.

One of the defensive strategies to counter impoliteness is using inversion or providing contradictions to the face-threatening utterances. The italicized words in excerpt 2 show that the recipient (Ray), replied "Not okay," in response to Hancock's, "You're all right", while in excerpt 8 Ray said, "Really not okay" in response to Hancock's "He all right". Ray's utterances indicate his denials toward Hancock's utterances stating that the boy (Michel) was fine after being thrown away into the sky. This study noted that after his repeated denials to Hancock's utterance, Ray shifted the topic of the conversation, asking how the kid's mother would react to Hancock's "He all right" seeing her son being thrown to the sky. Culpeper et al. (2003) noted that inversion alone in dealing with impoliteness could not bring "altercation" to an end. As a result, the use of inversion in dealing with impoliteness is followed by other strategies to quell the "verbal explosions", such as to stop talking or to use smarter tactics to minimize further damage to the face (e.g., changing the topic, changing the tone, or pretending not to hear) (Mortensen, 2006).

Excerpt 4 is also an example of how the recipient contradicted Hancock's utterance. The italicized words Ray speaking indicated his annoyance because Hancock interrupted his conversation with Mary. Ray wanted to hear Mary's explanation about the destruction of the city of Los Angeles, which involved her and Hancock. In the middle of the conversation, Hancock said, "Me too," indicating that he also wanted to hear what Mary was about to tell. Feeling annoyed because his conversation with Mary was interrupted, Ray denied that Hancock should not listen to or involve himself in the conversation.

In addition to using denials to the speaker's impoliteness, recipients may use opt-out on record strategy to defend his/her face. Opt-out on record occurs when the recipients chose to cover his face and not be involved in the conflict further (Culpeper et al., 2003). The italicized words in excerpt 3 indicate how the recipient chooses to "seal off" his face after being attacked by Hancock. Hancock called Ray's son using inappropriate identity marker, "little talking machine," because he was asking many questions. Ray realized that his son is a talkative and curious kid, especially when meeting with strangers. Intended to cover his face, Ray said, "We don't have a lot of guests over here," indicating that he expected Hancock not to be annoyed with his son and not to continue the talks about his curious son.

Another strategy used by the recipients to counter Hancock's impoliteness is the insincere agreement by which the recipient expresses his anger but with forced agreement toward the impoliteness. The italicized words in excerpt 7 show how the recipient was forced to agree with the impoliteness in order to reduce the tension. In that

excerpt, Hancock flew into the air carrying the car with the villain inside. Knowing that the villains were scared, Hancock offered them to be taken down. Although they knew that offer to bring the car down is just a mocking, they were forced to agree with Hancock, hoping that Hancock was serious with his offering.

The last strategy the recipient used to counter Hancock's impoliteness is ignoring implied face attacks. This strategy occurs when the recipient disregard the speaker's act or utterance as impoliteness. The italicized words in excerpt 9 and 10 are examples of how recipients ignored Hancock's impoliteness. In excerpt 9, Hancock ignored Ray's advice on raising his public image so that people will respect him and left the conversation. While in excerpt 10, Hancock remained silent when Ray asked his family not to put down Hancock for saving his life from the train collision. Ray did not regard these acts as impolite despite the fact of his knowledge that he was disrespected. The use of such ignorance to other people's kindness and politeness is considered as ignoring the implied impoliteness.

#### 4.3. Hancock's impoliteness and the exercise of power

In this section, the researchers described how impoliteness serves the purposes of exercising power. The researcher classified the purposes following Beebe's instrumental purposes of impoliteness (1995): to appear as a superior, to get power over actions, and to dominate the conversation. Table 3 presents how impoliteness serves the purposes of exercising power.

**Table 3**

The purposes of exercising power through impoliteness.

No	Purposes of the exercise of power	Frequency
1	To appear as superior	9
2	To get power over actions	15
3	To dominate the conversation	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>31</b>

The table above presents the frequency of the purposes of Hancock's impoliteness. It includes 9 impolite utterances aiming to appear himself as a superior person through insulting and putting down others, 15 impolite utterances aiming to get power (authority) over actions, and 7 impolite utterances aiming to dominate the conversations. This study also found two other utterances not belonging to these three purposes proposed by Beebe (1995). These two utterances belong to the withhold impoliteness by which a person gains control of the situations (Kurzon, 1992).

##### 4.3.1. To appear as superior

Among the reasons for people being impolite is to appear as superior to the interlocutors (Beebe, 1995). The impolite utterances presented in excerpts 1 and 5 show how impoliteness serves the purpose of exercising power to appear as superior.

In excerpt 1, Hancock used the impolite utterance, “What do you want, a cookie? Get out of my face,” to show his superiority over a kid who showed him the police pursuit of the criminals aired on TV. Using intentional, direct, and unambiguous utterances (bald, on record impoliteness) is considered impolite, but the raising intonations in conveying the message indicate an attempt to show the speaker’s superiority over the interlocutors.

Hancock’s impolite utterance in excerpt 5 also provides us an example of how face attacks aim to show the speaker’s superiority over interlocutors. In that excerpt, Hancock used the combination of threatening utterances (bald, on record) and taboo words, which successfully elevate the level of impoliteness and, hence showed himself as superior over interlocutors. This is in line with Kaul de Marlangeon (2019) that the use of impoliteness shows the speakers’ ability in subordinating others that aggressiveness is introduced into social relations.

#### *4.3.2. To get power over actions*

Another reason for someone using impoliteness as an exercise of power is to get authority over actions (Beebe, 1995), such as by getting interlocutors to do something, avoiding doing something, and using sarcasm or pushy politeness to get people to do something. The impolite words in excerpt 6, 7, and 8 are examples of impoliteness as an exercise of power to get authority over actions.

In excerpt 6, Hancock insisted that Mary was lying about their filiation and avoided admitting that they are relatives. Hancock’s insistence on denying his relation to Mary is reflected by his repetition, “That’s a lie.” Beebe (1995) noted that the use of repetition is a linguistic strategy “used to get power to avoid” something.

This repetition is also seen in Hancock’s utterances in excerpt 7 and 8. In excerpt 7, Hancock repeatedly said, “You want down? I’m real good at down” to show his implicit avoidance of bringing the villains’ car down safely. In excerpt 8, Hancock repeatedly said, “You’re all right” and “He’s all right” to indicate his denial that the boy he threw into the sky, in reality, was not all right. The use of such insincere utterance as mocking or sarcasm is a way for the speaker to get power over his actions (Beebe, 1995; Kaul de Marlangeon, 2019).

#### *4.3.3. To dominate the conversations*

The purpose of an exercise of power is also expressed when the speaker attempts to dominate the conversation by interrupting someone’s talking, making someone talk, getting the floor, or shaping what the interlocutors tell (Beebe, 1995). The impolite utterances in excerpt 3 and 4 are examples of Hancock’s impoliteness used to dominate the conversation.

In excerpt 3, Hancock used an inappropriate identity marker, “little talking machine,” to make Aaron stop questioning him. While in excerpt 4, Hancock interrupted the conversation between Mary and her husband, Ray. This act of

interruption made Ray annoyed and asked Hancock to give them space, letting them talk about their (supposed to be) private conversation. The use of such acts, such as making someone stop talking and interrupting others' talk, is considered as using impoliteness to exercise power by dominating the conversation (Beebe, 1995; Kaul de Marlangeon, 2019).

#### 4.3.4. *To maintain control of the situations*

Beebe (1995) states that the use of impoliteness as an exercise of power aims at appearing as superior, getting power over actions, and dominating the conversation. However, the use of silence as an act of impoliteness is incompatible with Beebe's theory of instrumental politeness as the exercise of power. In excerpt 9 and 10, Hancock used silence as an indication that he was in control of the situations.

In excerpt 9, Ray was defending Hancock's face over the public. Hearing this, instead of saying thanks for being defended, Hancock remained silent and walked away. Hancock realized that people always looked down upon him and disfavoured his presence; therefore, Ray's attempt to save his public image was considered irrelevant.

Hancock's act of failing to fulfil the expected politeness is also shown in excerpt 10. Ray offered help Hancock to change his public image as a repay for saving his life. However, instead of showing interest and thanking, Hancock remained silent because, again, Ray's offer to save his public image is irrelevant.

Hancock's silence does not mean he is not interested in Ray's advice in winning public respect. Instead, he seemed to know the response to Ray's kindness, but silently hide it to maintain his control over situations. Kurzon (1992) noted that someone might be prevented from doing the expected politeness due to psychological restrain (e.g., pride or shyness). In the case of Hancock, his silence can be interpreted as "I thank you, but for the sake of my pride and dignity, I will not tell you." It is in line with Sifianou (2019) that silence as an act of impoliteness can be a means of "disguising a vested interest in maintaining the status quo of the powerful" (p. 56). In conclusion, silence or deliberate ignorance may be considered as an exercise of power to maintain control over undesired situations.

## 5. Conclusion

This study has investigated the types of impoliteness, the way recipients respond to them, and how impoliteness serves the purposes of exercising power. In response to the offending situations, people tend to be provoked to use impolite utterances, and reciprocally the recipients also tend to retaliate the impoliteness rather than not to respond to or accepting it (Bousfield, 2008). This study has demonstrated that people tend to attack the interlocutor's face when they are dealt with provoking situations in a conversation. Regarding the response to the face attacks, the recipients also tend to counter the face attacks as an act of retaliation rather than to accept or not to respond to the face attacks. Despite the potential to trigger the conflict spiral between both

interlocutors, the offensive and defensive counter-strategies might also potentially be used to negotiate power in the conversation. Part of this paper has also addressed how impoliteness functions as an exercise of power. In addition to appear as superior, to get authority over actions, and to dominate the conversations in exercising power through impoliteness as Beebe (1995) proposed, this study also found that silence as an act of impoliteness may function to negotiate power by maintaining control over the situations. The finding adds substantially to our understanding that silence as an impoliteness strategy might also serve the purpose of exercising power. This, however, is open to debate and further research would verify or contradict this claim.

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