

Arabian Gulf Journal of Humanities and Social Studies

ISSN: 3080-4086

Vol 6 - Issue 18 || Issued Date: 20-09-2026



Strategic Impolite Responses in American Presidential Press Conferences: A Pragmatic Analysis

الردود الاستراتيجية اللاتأدبية في المؤتمرات الصحفية الرئاسية الامريكية: تحليل تداولي

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64355/agjhss61831>

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Abstract:

The present paper conducts a pragmatic study of the notion of impoliteness in some American presidential press conferences. It specifically attempts to investigate the strategically impolite responses to the reporters' questions. As far as politics is concerned, this notion of impoliteness has not gained enough research. This paper tackles the problem of using impoliteness to achieve certain political persuasive and effective goals rather than for default social hostility. The present study tries to find out the communicative goals behind politicians' impolite responses. It also attempts to explore the possible functions and strategies of impoliteness in ongoing political interactions.

This study is based on the hypotheses: (1) impoliteness is strategically rather than randomly demonstrated in American presidential press conferences and (2) impolite responses are mainly employed to express social hostile behaviors in American presidential press conferences. The findings prove the validity of the hypothesis (1) and reject (2). This paper has come with the conclusion that impoliteness is not mostly employed to express social hostility, personal stance or escalate conflict but it is rather strategically employed to achieve certain effective persuasive political goals.

Keywords: Impoliteness, face, Super/ Micro-strategies and functions of impoliteness.

المخلص:

تتبنى هذه الدراسة تحليلاً تداولياً لمفهوم اللاتأدب في عددٍ من المؤتمرات الصحفية الرئاسية الأمريكية، وتركّز على وجه الخصوص على الردود الاستراتيجية اللاتأدبية التي يقدّمها الرؤساء الأمريكيون لأسئلة المراسلين. وعلى الرغم من أهمية هذا المفهوم في الخطاب السياسي، فإنه لم يحظَ بالقدر الكافي من البحث والدراسة. وتتناول هذه الدراسة إشكالية توظيف اللاتأدب بوصفه أداةً لتحقيق أهداف سياسية إقناعية وفعالة، بدلاً من استخدامه بوصفه تعبيراً افتراضياً عن العداء الاجتماعي. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن الأهداف التواصلية الكامنة وراء الردود اللاتأدبية التي يستخدمها السياسيون، فضلاً عن استقصاء الوظائف والاستراتيجيات المحتملة للاتأدب في التفاعلات السياسية الحية.

وتستند الدراسة إلى فرضيتين رئيسيتين: الأولى، أن اللاتأدب في المؤتمرات الصحفية الرئاسية الأمريكية يُوظف بصورة استراتيجية وليس بصورة عشوائية؛ والثانية، أن الردود اللاتأدبية تُستخدم أساساً للتعبير عن السلوكيات العدائية الاجتماعية في هذه المؤتمرات. وقد أثبتت نتائج الدراسة صحة الفرضية الأولى، في حين رفضت الفرضية الثانية. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن اللاتأدب لا يُستخدم في الغالب للتعبير عن العداء الاجتماعي أو الموقف الشخصي أو لتصعيد الصراع، وإنما يُوظف بصورة استراتيجية لتحقيق أهداف سياسية إقناعية وفعالة محددة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللاتأدب، الوجه الاجتماعي، الاستراتيجيات الكبرى، الاستراتيجيات الفرعية، وظائف اللاتأدب.

1. Introduction

As its name implies, impoliteness is the opposite of politeness. It refers to a "behaviour that is face-aggravating in a particular context" (Locher and Bousfield, 2008: 2). This study has the task of investigating impoliteness, its types, functions and strategies from the pragmatic perspective in political contexts. It specifically concentrates on strategically impolite responses shown in American presidential press conferences. Compared with politeness, this linguistic phenomenon of impoliteness has not gained much attention in political contexts. In other words, it has not received enough research and scrutiny. This study attempts to answer the following questions: (1) What is impoliteness? (2) What are the super strategies and micro-strategies of politeness that are dominant in American presidential

press conferences? and (3) what are the significant functions of impolite responses in American presidential press conferences?

The study aims to explore the notion of impoliteness specifying its types, functions and strategies. It attempts to find out the frequently occurring super strategies of impoliteness in American presidential press conferences. Besides, it aims to explore the dominant micro-strategies as exhibited in politicians' responses. Significantly, this study attempts to find out the speaker's intentions behind perpetrating certain aggressive acts. To achieve the aforementioned aims, it is hypothesized that: (1) impoliteness is strategically rather than randomly demonstrated in American presidential press conferences, (2) impolite responses are mainly employed to express social hostile behaviors in American presidential press conferences and (3) American officials tend to use impoliteness in a clear and direct manner.

The data under scrutiny consists of (41) exchanges within (3) American presidential press conferences randomly selected to be the data of analysis. To arrive at specific findings and conclusions, the researcher examines the results in the light of statistical tools based on the distribution of frequency and percentage of the super strategies and micro-strategies of impoliteness. A special attention has been given to the strategic use of impoliteness strategies in American presidential press conferences. The model of analysis is basically based on Culpeper's (1996,2005) model of strategies of impoliteness. Culpeper's model consists of five super strategies. Each strategy manifests in a number of smaller strategies called micro-strategies.

This present research is restricted to the pragmatic level of analysis of impoliteness. It does not incorporate the two related pragmatic phenomena: politeness and rudeness. Despite its significant role, non-verbal impoliteness lies out of the scope of this study. This study is hoped to be useful for those researchers interested particularly in the field of pragmatics

2. Impoliteness: An Overview

Impoliteness is just one set of conflictive illocutions. Leech (1983: 105) says that such "conflictive illocutions tend, thankfully, to be rather marginal to human linguistic behaviour in normal circumstances". Culpeper et al. (2003: 1546) argue against this view stating that there are many contexts in which conflicting illocutions are vital such as army training discourse, courtroom discourse, family discourse, adolescent discourse among others. In such contexts, politeness theories cannot account completely for the interaction. In an earlier work, Culpeper (2001: xii) states that impoliteness is a new field of study. It is against prejudice. It is involved in aggression, abuse, bullying and harassment. Minimally, it results in emotional pain but can even end in suicide. Elen (2001:45) argues that politeness and impoliteness can be two sides of the same coin: one side is positive (politeness) and the other one is negative (impoliteness).

Watts (2003: 5) deals with the term impoliteness as included within politeness. He expresses his surprise concerning the considerable emphasis on politeness rather than impoliteness. In fact, it is the impolite behaviour which is more likely to be commented on in verbal interaction. To him (ibid: 18), impoliteness is an explicit form of social behavior which is incompatible with acceptable and appropriate norms of behavior.

Culpeper et al. (2003: 1546) concentrate on the notion of face defining impoliteness as "communicative strategies designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony". The same thing is true with Bousfield (2008: 72) who views impoliteness as opposite to politeness, i.e. "rather than seeking to mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs), impoliteness constitutes the

communication of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face-threatening acts (FTAs) which are purposefully delivered." Besides, such acts are perceived as unmitigated, where contextually mitigation is required, and/or," With deliberate aggression, that is, with the face threat exacerbated, 'boosted' or maximized in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted ". According to him (ibid), successful impoliteness occurs when the hearer understands the speaker's intention to offend or to threaten/damage face. Once the speaker's intention to offend is understood by the hearer as impolite, the utterance is deemed to be impolite.

Looking at impoliteness through three dimensions, Culpeper (2005: 38) says that it "comes about when: (1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behaviour as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2)". This definition sheds the light on the hearer's role in constructing behaviour as impolite irrespective of the speaker's intention. Culpeper (2011:63) explains the difference between rudeness and impoliteness. The former refers to cases where the offence is unintentionally caused while the latter refers to cases where the offence is intentionally caused.

In an earlier work, the term aggression is identified by Baron and Richardson (1994: 7) as "any form of behaviour directed toward the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment" . According to Brown and Levinson's theory, any behaviour that intends to save the face of the addressee is polite while any behaviour that is taken to attack the face of the addressee is impolite (Aydinoğlu, 2013: 473). It should be noted that this theory is based on Goffman's face notion and Grice's maxims.

Culpeper (2011: 23) comes to shed the light on context as an influential factor in signaling impolite acts. He (ibid) further elaborates that:

"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 a group's identities are mediated by others in interaction. Situated behaviours are viewed negatively – considered "impolite" [...]. Various factors can exacerbate how offensive an impolite behaviour is taken to be, including for example whether one understands a behaviour

This detailed definition is taken to be the operational definition for impoliteness throughout this paper since it introduces a comprehensive interpretation of impoliteness including aggressiveness, verbal behaviour, face-attack and intentionality. Worthy mentioning, both politeness and impoliteness are seen to be deeply rooted in the social environment where they take place, i.e. a specific act which is considered polite in some social context could be impolite in another (Juvonen, 2025: 6).

2.1 The Concept of Face

Face is a crucial concept in the investigation of impoliteness phenomenon. It goes back to Erving Goffman in the 1960s. Goffman (1967: 213) defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact". In their politeness theory, Brown and Livenson (1987: 62) use the concept face viewing it as either negative or positive. The former is seen as "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others" while the latter is the "want of every member that his wants to be desirable to at least some others" (ibid).

According to Yule (1996: 60), face is a technical term used to indicate "the public self-image of a person" which "refers to the emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognize". The negative face should not be understood as bad. It represents the need to be independent having freedom of action while the positive face represents the need to be connected and accepted as a member of the group (ibid: 62).

Culpeper (1996: 351) believes that an inherently impolite act is recognized as offensive and since it harms the other's positive face, this impolite act cannot be used in a polite way. For instance, it is difficult to find a polite way to ask someone to stop picking their nose by saying '*Would you please stop picking your nose*'. This person might still feel embarrassed and offended by such a request.

As far as political discourse as concerned, Silitonga et al. (2025: 242) point out that positive face and negative face are vital for politicians therefore they intend to be liked by others, appear to be careful not to say something that may limit their future acts and seek freedom of actions. In specific, the threatening acts to the positive face include disapproval remarks, criticism, ridicule, contempt, complaints, accusations, reprimands, insults, contradictions, challenges and disagreements while the threatening acts to the negative face include requests, orders, suggestions, warnings, threats, advice and reminders (ibid: 244)

2.2 Types of Impolite Acts

Face types are said to be developed so as to cope with nature of political genre. In this regard, Reisigl (2008: 244) presents three dimensions associated with politolinguistics: 'polity', 'politics' and 'policy'. The first dimension of 'polity' deals with the political framework for political actors; i.e. it is associated with the formal prerequisites and essential political principles or conventions of political action. Legal systems, political cultures, constitution, norms and values as well as institutional rules can be examples of polity. Alhindawi and Alkhazaali (2016: 58) point out that 'polity' face-threats embrace impolite acts that are offensive to "the other's polity principles, culture and values".

The second dimension of 'policy', according to Reisigl (2008: 244), is concerned with the content-oriented aspects of political action. In this context, it covers the formulation of political goals, tasks and programmes in different fields such as domestic affairs, social policy, foreign policy, economic policy as well as cultural and educational policy. Alhindawi and Alkhazaali (2016: 58) states that policy face-threats involve impolite acts that offensive to "the other's policies, aims, tasks and programmes".

Finally, Reisigl (2008: 244) refers that the third dimension of 'politics' is concerned with "political processes, i.e. the question of how and with whose help politics are performed". In addition, politics deals with political interests, the continual conflict between political actors, positioning against others, political propaganda or fighting for supporters or followers and the acquisition of power. Thus, conflicts in electoral campaigns and debates can be a prototypical instance of politics (Ibid). Hence,

Alhindawi and Alkhazaali (2016: 58) elucidate that 'politics' face-threats incorporate impolite acts that are offensive to "the other's political interests, advertisements, propaganda and disputes with others".

2.3 Functions of Impoliteness

Impoliteness aims to achieve certain functions. However, there is no agreement among linguists on such functions. Through her reviewing of linguistic impoliteness, Kasper (1990: 20) presents a section on rudeness where she comes to introduce three functions for motivated rudeness: (1) rudeness due to lack of affect control, i.e. to override defensive and protective politeness (2) strategic rudeness, i.e. used by an actor for achieving a certain goal and (3) ironic rudeness, i.e. to convey impolite beliefs in an overtly polite form.

Beebe (1995: 159 cited in Schnurr et al., 2008: 214) states that a significant function of impoliteness is to cancel power. This appears to be opposed to rudeness which may attempt to exercise power by the speaker in order to be superior and get power over actions and in an interaction.

Culpeper (2011: 23) distinguishes three functions of impoliteness: affective impoliteness, coercive impoliteness and entertaining impoliteness. The first function of 'affective impoliteness' refers to the use of an unstrained expression of emotion in a situation where such an expression is not normal or prohibited. Thus, an anger is expressed with the intention to blame for negative emotional state. When someone answers *'you don't even have the goddamn phone turned on'*, an implicature can be drawn that he is implying that she should have the phone turned on.]

The second function of 'coercive impoliteness' seeks to reorder values between the speaker and the hearer such that the speaker benefits or has their present benefits enhanced or protected. This function is believed to occur in situations where there is mostly an imbalance of social power and it involves coercive action that is not in the interest of the hearer, i.e. it harms the hearer forcing compliance (ibid: 28). Consider the following example:

- *Police officer: Which lie are you telling me?*

- *Immigrant: I'm not lying, sir, I'm just . . .*

In the above exchange of conversation, the police officer exercises power over immigrant interrupting him and trying to make him comply to his negative presupposition.

The third function of 'entertaining impoliteness' involves entertainment at the expense of the hearer or victim of the impoliteness. The term victim denotes "someone who has suffered as a result of someone else's actions or [beliefs](#), or as a result of [unpleasant](#) circumstances" ([Collins English Dictionary](#)). Culpeper (2011: 23) outlines that the target is not always aware of the impoliteness, but the participants who get entertained are always aware of who the target is. Apart from the target, the others can understand the frequent impoliteness effects for the target. This is necessary for achieving entertainment. In this regard, five sources of pleasure exhibiting entertaining impoliteness are distinguished: emotional pleasure (Observing impoliteness creates a pleasurable state of arousal in the observer), aesthetic pleasure (requiring creative skills), voyeuristic pleasure (exposing private selves), the pleasure of feeling superior (observing someone in a worse state than oneself) and the pleasure of feeling safe (feeling insecure so wishing to make hasty exit) (ibid: 235).

Juvonen (2025: 16) confirms that as far as political discourse is concerned, impoliteness often acts as an intentional and strategic tool. It often functions to undermine the opponent, impose dominance, or create a sort of entertainment for the audience.

3. Context

Context plays an influential part in the interpretation of impoliteness. Culpeper (1996:351) states that the same utterance can be interpreted as polite or impolite depending on the context in which it is said. As a result, an innocent misunderstanding of a good conversation can be turned into a heated argument. For example, the utterance 'John is smart' can be interpreted as a praise 'John is really smart' (politeness) or sarcasm 'John is stupid' (impoliteness). For this reason, it is generally held that politeness and impoliteness are two sides for the same coin: positive and negative (Elen, 2001:45).

Culpeper et al. (2003:1555) argue that impoliteness does not arise merely from particular strategies but it highly relies on the context. According to Välikangas (2005: 5), contextual factors affecting the interpretation of impoliteness are the relationship of participants, their behaviour and the topic of the conversation.

Culpeper (2011: 195) confirms that context is an essential element in his definition of impoliteness. For him (ibid) politeness "is a negative evaluative attitude towards behaviours in context." Juvonen (2025: 25) mentions that impoliteness is "context-bound", and in order to evaluate it, the analyst should take into consideration the factors "the norms and expectations of the specific genre in which it occurs". Accordingly, the more seemingly indirect face-threatening acts could be perceived differently owing to context.

4. Strategies of Impoliteness (Culpeper's 1996,2005 Model)

A comprehensive account of impoliteness strategies is exhibited by Culpeper (1996, 2005). According to this model, there are five super strategies of impoliteness. Culpeper (1996: 356) believes that such "impoliteness super strategies are a means of attacking face" rather than "enhancing or supporting face." These strategies are further illustrated as follows:

(a) **Bald on record impoliteness**

The face threatening act (FTA) is deployed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise manner where face is not irrelevant (Culpeper, 1996: 356). Bousfield (2008: 134) affirms that with this strategy there is much face at risk and the speaker intends to attack the hearer's face "and/or where the speaker does not have the power to (safely) utter an impolite utterance". Here, Culpeper adopts the concept of face-attack-act (FAA), opposed to FTA, so as to identify the face attack where there is a deliberate intention on the part of the producer (Mullany and Stockwell, 2010: 71). An example is the utterance '*Shut up and act like a parking attendant!*' as uttered by an angry driver to a parking attendant.

(b) **Positive impoliteness**

According to Culpeper (2005: 41), positive impoliteness includes "the use of strategies deployed to damage the recipient's positive face wants". This involves ignoring or snubbing the other, excluding the other from the activity, disassociating from the other, being disinterested, not concerned or not sympathetic, using "inappropriate identity markers", using obscure or secretive language, seeking disagreement, making the other feel uncomfortable (e.g. by not avoiding silence, joke or using small talk), using taboo words, calling the other names, etc.

(c) Negative impoliteness

Culpeper (2005: 41) mentions that negative impoliteness includes "the use of strategies deployed to damage the recipient's negative face wants". Such strategies can include frightening, condescending, scorning, or ridiculing, invading the other's space, explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect, putting the other's indebtedness on record, etc.

(d) Off-record impoliteness

Culpeper (2005: 43) introduces this super strategy as a replacement to the previous strategy of sarcasm. Off-record impoliteness is one where the offence can be conveyed indirectly by way of an implicature and could be cancelled (denied, or an account, post-modification or other type of elaboration offered, etc.) but where " ... one attributable intention clearly outweighs any others" (ibid: 44). An example is the utterance '*Have a good day!*' as said sarcastically to a parking attendant by a driver on receiving a ticket.

This strategy is sometimes called 'mock politeness' or 'sarcasm'. Sarcasm refers to cases where utterances sound polite on the surface level but their meaning is the opposite. According to Haiman (1998: 21-2), sarcasm is a sort of word-play that could include an attitude or effect of verbal aggression. This negativity and aggression of this concept can be intended toward another participant present in the exchange, or an individual who is not present in the situation (such as in gossiping), "or can be a general perspective or attitude about a person or object" (Bousfield, 2010: 213).

Norrick (1993: 135) and Barbe (1995: 28-9) believe that sarcasm is perceived as the most aggressive or negative device of irony since it expresses a high degree of threatening towards the other party making the listener the means of joking. Gibbs (2001: 13) thinks that sarcasm is one of the prominent forms of irony. It depends on context as the speaker means the opposite of what s/he really or literally says.

In an earlier work, Happe (1993: 101) remarks that sarcasm is used in conversations and other kinds of genre to mock another person while keeping someone's own status and position elevated. Gibbs (2001: 189) points out that sarcasm can be either praise for criticism or criticism for praise. Burgers *et al.* (2012: 232) hold that the use of praising for criticism is one of the strategies that show awareness to the context to be taken as right in its communicative effect. Accordingly, the negative message will be felicitous as in the following example:

- "*How funny!*" to mean *how depressing*.

As for criticism, sarcasm has a positive effect the same as banter or mock-impoliteness. This is considered as a compliment or praise for the other, as in the following instance:

- *You've certainly made a mess of things!*

(e) Withhold politeness

One Keeps silent or fails to act where politeness work is expected. Culpeper (1996: 357) refers that impoliteness may be conveyed through ". . . the absence of politeness work where it would be expected." Culpeper (2005: 42) makes it clear "failing to thank someone for a present may be taken as deliberate impoliteness".

5. Model of Analysis

The model of analysis is basically based on Culpeper's (1996,2005) model of strategies of impoliteness. This Culpeper's model consists of five super strategies. Each strategy manifests in a number of smaller strategies called micro-strategies. In brief, both the strategies and micro-strategies are seen in the figure (1) below:

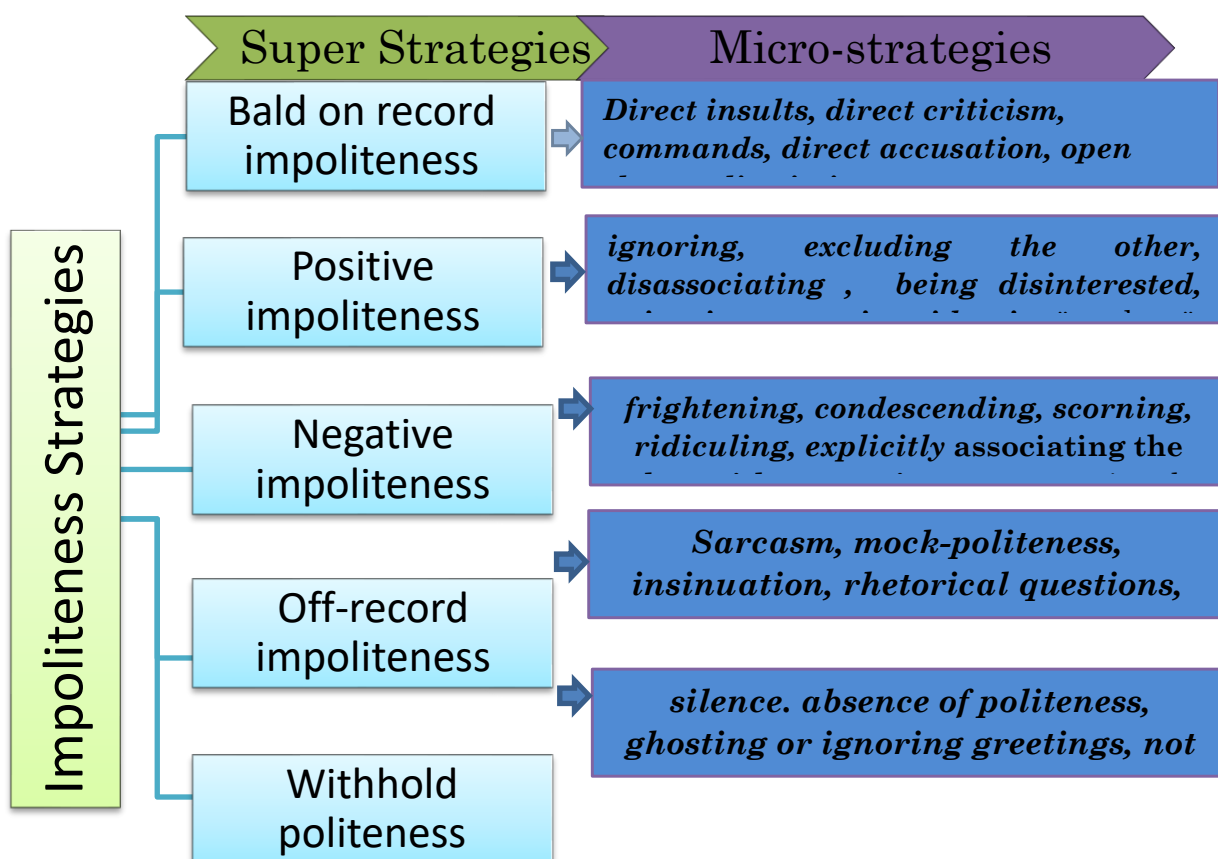


Fig. (1) Super Strategies of Impoliteness with their Respective Micro-strategies

6. Data Analysis and Discussion

6.1 Data Collection and Description

In order to explore the super strategies, micro-strategies and functions of impolite responses, three American presidential press conferences are randomly selected to be the data of analysis. Within these three conferences, about (41) exchanges are qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. Each exchange can comprise one to nine super strategies, micro-strategies and functions of impoliteness. The results are also examined in the light of statistical tools based on the distribution of frequency and percentage of the super strategies and micro-strategies of impoliteness. For economy in space, only ten exchanges are exhibited in the analysis section.

6.2 Analysis

SITUATION 1 President Trump holds a Press Conference

General context: This press conference is held during a highly sensitive period in the US due to the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

Date: August 13, 2020

Location: The White House

Topic: COVID-19, economic recovery and political opponents as well as the upcoming election.

Exchange (1)

Reporter: "Thank you, Mr. President. I appreciate it. I want to ask you about school-aged kids and food. One of the real problems when you shut down the schools: These are kids on reduced and free lunch programs; they need these meals to make it through their day. And with districts shutting down school, what, if anything, can the federal government do to make sure that the kids still get decent meals, as long as the schools are out?"

President Trump: "Well, you know we don't want the schools shut down. We want the schools to open. [...] *Some people say they don't want — the Democrats don't want schools open, because that's where you have a lot of polling booths.* And if you have a school close, you can't very easily have polling booths at the school. And that's becoming — I think maybe we'll be able to show that as fact, but *that's another thing that they're doing to try and keep people away from the polls.* So we have to look into that, but it's — you've been reading about it, I've been reading about it, and I don't like it."

Analysis

- 1- "*Some people say they don't want*" (off-record impoliteness / insinuation/ reducing public trust of the opponent)
- 2- "*the Democrats don't want schools open*" (bald on record impoliteness / direct accusation/ discrediting the opponents)
- 3- "*that's another thing that they're doing to try and keep people away from the polls. .*" (bald on record impoliteness / direct accusation/ delegitimizing the opponents)

In (1), Trump uses the super strategy 'off-record impoliteness' (the offence can be conveyed indirectly) utilising the micro-strategy 'insinuation' (by hinting) with the intention to *decrease public trust of the opponent*. In (2) and (3), he adopts the super strategy 'on record impoliteness' (there is much face at risk clearly and directly) utilising the micro-strategy 'direct accusation' with the intention to damage public image of his rivals and delegitimize them.

Exchange (2)

Reporter: " But this morning you said you were against it, didn't you?"

President Trump: "[...] It wasn't their fault that they got shut down. *They got shut down by China.*"

Analysis

1- " *They got shut down by China.*" (bald on record impoliteness / direct accusation/ mobilizing supporters)

In (1), he adopts the super strategy '*on record impoliteness*' utilising the micro-strategy '*direct accusation*' with the intention to mobilize supporters by sharing uncertain information about the American commercial opponent, China.

Exchange (3)

Reporter: " There's no widespread evidence of fraud, though."

President Trump: " Look at California, *where they found a million non-eligible voters.*

Here, Trump uses the super strategy '*off-record impoliteness*' using the micro-strategy '*insinuation*' to decrease the public trust of his opponents, the Democrats by indirectly accusing them of rigging the votes.

Exchange (4)

Reporter: " How does it help struggling and persecuted Christians in the Middle East — the deal today?"

President Trump: " I think they will very well with respect to Christianity, because in the Middle East, *it's not treated well. It's not treated well at all. It's treated horribly and very unfairly, and it's criminal what's happened — and that's for many, many years.*"

Analysis

Trump adopts the super strategy '*on record impoliteness*' utilising the micro-strategy '*direct accusation*' with the intention to assert power and dominance.

Exchange (5)

Reporter: " But can I ask a follow-up on that?"

President Trump: (pointing to another reporter) "Please, go ahead."

Analysis

Trump adopts the super strategy '*positive impoliteness*' (*damaging the reporter's positive face wants*) utilising the micro-strategy '*ignoring*' with the intention to delegitimize the reporter's question as well as considering it a unimportant one.

SITUATION 2 President Trump holds his first Press Conference

General context: After winning the 2016 U.S. presidential election and before his inauguration as the 45th President of the United States on January 20, 2017.

Date: January 11, 2017

Location: Trump Tower, New York City, United States.

Topic: Allegations regarding Russian interference in the 2016 election and Immigration policy.

Exchange (6)

Reporter: "Do you accept that part of the finding? And will you undo what President Obama did to punish the Russians for this or will you keep it in place?"

President Trump: "I mean if you look, **this administration created ISIS by leaving at the wrong time.** The void was created, ISIS was formed. [...] Now, I don't know that I'm gonna get along with Vladimir Putin. I hope I do. But there's a good chance I won't. **And if I don't, do you honestly believe that Hillary would be tougher on Putin than me?** Does anybody in this room really believe that? Give me a break."

Analysis

- 1- **"this administration created ISIS by leaving at the wrong time."** (bald on record impoliteness / direct criticism/ discrediting the opponents)
- 2- **"And if I don't, do you honestly believe that Hillary would be tougher on Putin than me?"**
Trump uses the super strategy 'off- record impoliteness' utilising the micro-strategy 'rhetorical question' with the intention to suggest intellectual weakness of his opponent Hillary Clinton.

Exchange (7)

Reporter: "The tweet that you had this morning about are we living in Nazi Germany, what were you driving at there? What are you trying to tell the American public?"

President Trump:

- 1- **" I think it was disgraceful -- disgraceful "** (bald on record impoliteness / direct criticism/undermining institutional trust, e.g. agencies, press, etc.)
- 2- **" that the intelligence agencies allowed any information that turned out to be so false and fake out. "** (bald on record impoliteness / direct accusation/ deny accountability)
- 3- **" think it's a disgrace, and I say that -- and I say that, and that's something that Nazi Germany would have done and did do. "** ('off-record impoliteness/ metaphor / reducing the public image in the press)
- 4- **" As far as Buzzfeed, which is a failing pile of garbage, writing it, "** (bald on record impoliteness / direct insult/ delegitimizing the source)
- 5- **" I think they're going to suffer the consequences "** (bald on record impoliteness / open threat/ attacking the credibility of the source)
- 6- **" And as far as CNN going out of their way to build it up -- and by the way, "** (negative impoliteness' / explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect/ attacking the credibility of the source)
- 7- **" It's a disgrace and I think they ought to apologize to start with Michael Cohen. "** (negative impoliteness' / scorning/ disclaim responsibility)

Exchange (8)

Reporter: " Can you state...?"

President Trump: " *You are fake news. Go ahead.* "

Analysis

Trump adopts the super strategy *bald on record impoliteness'* utilising the micro-strategy '*direct insult'* in order to *express his contempt about the organization*

SITUATION 3 President Trump holds a Press Conference with members of the White House Journalists and his team of experts.

General context:	The press conference is held on Trump's second term as a president for America.
Date:	June 4, 2026
Location:	White House, Washington, D.C., United States of America
Topic:	The press discusses domestic and foreign issues; questions from reporters on current administration matters such as coal energy and stance with Iran.

Exchange (9)

Reporter: " If you could choose -- Mr. President, if you could choose, what would you ask them to do, sir, if you want --?"

President Trump:

Analysis

- 1- "*there's no navy, there's no air force, [...]* *They're down on the third*" (negative impoliteness' / 'explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect/ to support his political decisions)
- 2- " *we've wiped them out, we've wiped out their leadership and almost all of it. We've wiped out all their military leaders.*" (negative impoliteness' / 'scorning'/ to support his political decisions)
- 3- " *I can't tell you that, but certainly the first ones didn't do very good [...]* *They had to get new generals. And then after that, they had to get more new generals.* " (negative impoliteness' /ridiculing/ to acquire publicity)
- 4- " *they were literally after three days, almost the entire military was wiped out* " (negative impoliteness' / 'scorning'/ to support his political decisions)
- 5- " *we've wiped them out, we've wiped out their leadership and almost all of it. We've wiped out all their military leaders.[...]* *And we knocked out their anti-aircraft, their air force,*

just about everything you can knock out. " (negative impoliteness' / 'scorning'/ to support his political decisions)

- 6- ***" So, uh, and then you read in the fake news that they're doing really well in the war. [...] I mean, it's unbelievable., [...] And one thing I think that's done is expose how corrupt our media is "*** (bald on record impoliteness / direct accusation / to attack the credibility of the press)
- 7- ***" They're like a gnat, you know, like, get off."*** (negative impoliteness' /ridiculing/ to acquire publicity)
- 8- ***" Can you believe this?"*** (off-record impoliteness' /rhetorical question/ to attack the credibility of his opponents)
- 9- ***" But the numbers are looking strange "*** (off-record impoliteness / insinuation/ reducing public trust of the opponent)

Exchange (10)

Reporter: " Mr. President, Joe Biden is out promoting a new book this week. When you met with Joe Biden, President Joe Biden, right here in the Oval Office on November the 13th of 2024, could you detect any cognitive decline in President Biden at that time?"

President Trump:

Analysis

- 1- ***" No, not really, he was the same guy I've been watching for a long time. I mean, you could go back 40 years, I watched him 40 years ago, 30 years ago, "*** ('off-record impoliteness', 'sarcasm' / to ridicule Biden and reduce his public image.)
- 2- ***" he was never the sharpest guy, you do know that, right? It wasn't like he was sharp as a tack,"*** (negative impoliteness' / 'explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect/ to delegitimize Biden)
- 3- ***" And I thought I had a very good debate. Nobody ever says that, "*** ('negative impoliteness', 'condescending' / to express contempt and attack the objectivity of the press)

6.3 Statistical Analysis and Discussions

This section is concerned with analyzing the super strategies as well as micro-strategies of politeness exhibited in section (3.2) above using a quantitative method. This way one can verify the validity of this study hypotheses. The results have been arrived at using Microsoft Excel software whereby both the frequencies and percentages are represented in a form of figures and tables. All in all, this is carried out in harmony with the model of this study. In short, this sections examines the strategies, micro-strategies, and functions of impolite acts.

6.3.1 Super Strategies of Impoliteness

The data under consideration is scrutinized based on five super strategies: 'bald on record impoliteness', 'positive impoliteness', 'negative impoliteness', 'off-record impoliteness' and 'withhold politeness'. In their use, these strategies have exhibited the percentages (43.55%), (2.42%), (35.48%), (17.74%) and (0.81%) respectively. Hence, the super strategy 'bald on record impoliteness' scores the

higher percentage compared to the other four super strategies. This shows that this super strategy is very dominant in the American press conferences. With this, the FTA is deployed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise manner where face.

The next super strategy 'negative impoliteness' occupies (35.48%). This indicates the common use of this strategy in the American press conferences. Here, the recipient's negative face wants are explicitly damaged. The 'off-record impoliteness' strategy is used in a moderate and balanced manner (17.74%). The rest two super strategies namely 'positive impoliteness', and 'withhold politeness' appear to be slightly utilized. The above discussion can be better illustrated by looking at the figure (2) below:

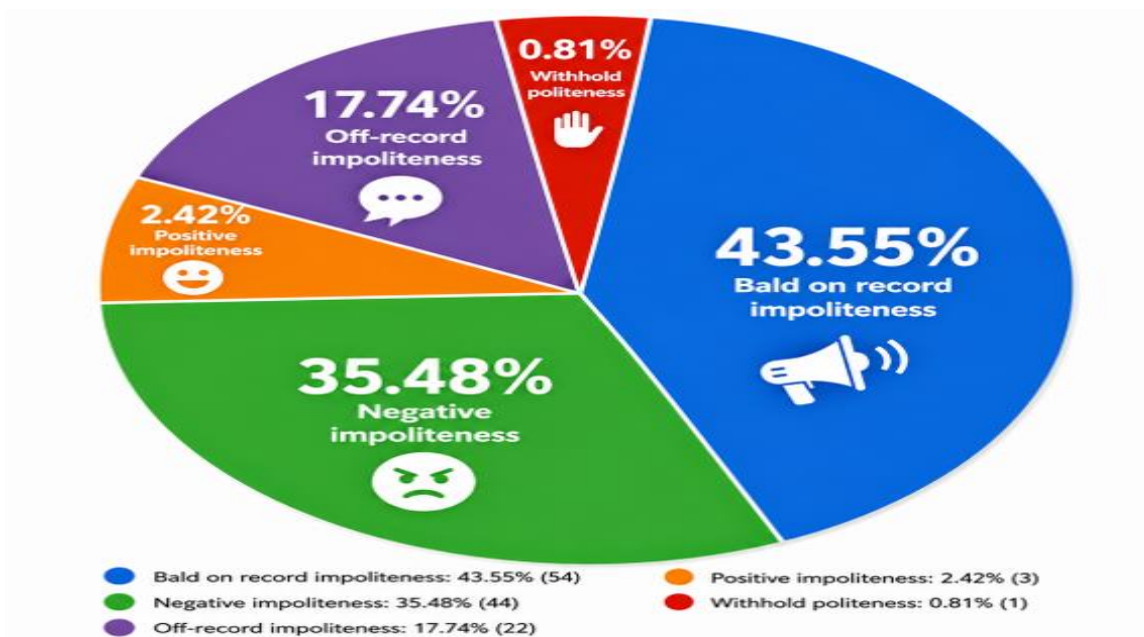


Fig. (2) The Distribution of the Impoliteness Super Strategies

6.3.2 Micro-strategies of Impoliteness

Each one of the five super strategies explained in (6.3.1) above comprises one or more micro-strategies of impoliteness. Specifically, the super strategy 'bald on record impoliteness' involves the micro-strategies: direct insult, direct accusation, direct criticism, open threat, calling names, dismissive statement and commanding, these score the percentages: (8.87%), (13.71%), (13.71%), (1.61%), (1.61%), (2.42%) and (1.61%) respectively. Direct accusation and direct criticism are mostly preferred among the seven micro-strategies. The direct insult is also dominant in American politicians' responses. The rest of the micro-strategies within the 'bald on record impoliteness' are almost equally utilized in the American press conferences. This indicates that Trump does not usually hide his hostility preferring the most direct and clear impolite manner.

The super strategy 'positive impoliteness' appears to be utilized in terms of two micro-strategies: 'ignoring' and 'excluding the other' with their respective percentages (1.61%) and (0.81). This use of positive impoliteness which has a marginal proportion indicates that there is little attack to the hearer's positive face because American politicians do not seem to be motivated to attack social belonging. They might think that attacking interpersonal rapport is less effective when addressing millions of people.

Besides the 'bald on record impoliteness', the next super strategy that has significant dominance in American press conferences is 'negative impoliteness'. This has been found to incorporate five micro-strategies: frightening, condescending, scorning, ridiculing and explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect with the percentages: (0.81%), (3.23%), (6.45%), (4.84%) and (20.16%) respectively. The last micro-strategy has precedence over the former four strategies. The next one scorning while the least used one is frightening. Condensing and ridiculing are approximately equally utilized with a slight priority to ridiculing. This implies that negative impoliteness is strategically rather than randomly employed. Significantly, the results indicate that the Trump primarily attempts to damage the opponent's public image by associating them with undesirable features such as weakness, failure, corruption or dishonesty.

Within the category of off-record impoliteness, the results have shown remarkable variation in the frequency of the micro-strategies. The most frequently utilized micro-strategy is insinuation (9.68%), followed by sarcasm (5.65%), rhetorical question (1.61%) whereas metaphor appears only rarely (0.81%). In this category, the offence can be conveyed indirectly by way of an implicature. Using insinuation, American politicians appear not to be responsible for the interpreted offence or damage to the opponent's face. Sarcasm is used to belittle the opponent with apparently good expression. Since American politicians seem to concentrate on conveying the intended message to the audience more successfully, they rarely resort to metaphor. More clearly, the indirectness manner is strategically-rooted rather i.e. it is not employed for polite purposes.

In this survey, the category 'withhold politeness' which constitutes the least frequently used super strategy has appeared to include only one micro-strategy 'silence' with the low percentage (0.81%). This indicates that omission of politeness or expecting politeness is not a feature of American presidential press conferences. Instead, politicians prefer more explicit forms of impoliteness such as bald on-record and negative impoliteness. The above discussion can be schematized in the figure (3) and table (1) below:

Super strategy	Impoliteness Micro-strategy	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Bald on record Impoliteness	Direct insult	11	8.87
	Direct accusation	17	13.71
	Direct criticism	17	13.71
	Open threat	2	1.61
	Calling names	2	1.61
	Dismissive statement	3	2.42
	Commanding	2	1.61
Positive Impoliteness	Ignoring	2	1.61
	Excluding the other	1	0.81
Negative Impoliteness	Frightening	1	0.81
	Condescending	4	3.23

Off-record Impoliteness	Scorning	8	6.45
	Ridiculing	6	4.84
	Explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect	25	20.16
	Sarcasm	7	5.65
Withhold politeness	Insinuation	12	9.68
	Rhetorical question	2	1.61
	Metaphor	1	0.81
	Science	1	0.81
	Total	124	100.00

Table (1): The Distribution of the Impoliteness Micro-strategies

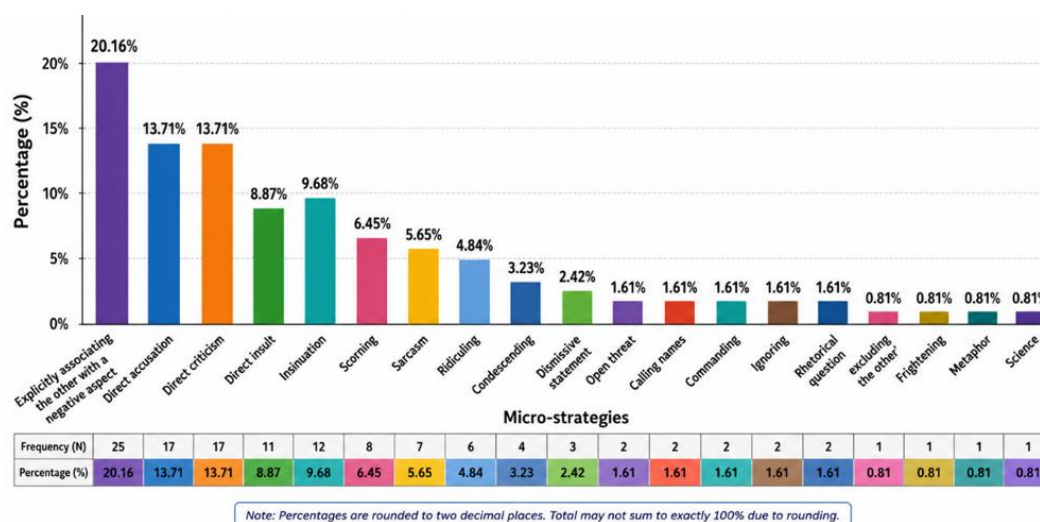


Fig. (3) The Distribution of the Impoliteness Micro-strategies

6.3.3 Functions of Impoliteness

Since pragmatics is concerned with what is communicated by the speaker rather than what is merely said, it seems vital to understand the speaker's communicative intention behind any face attacking act. Obviously, in American press conferences, impoliteness is strategically rather than spontaneously employed. To be phrased differently, American politicians utilize impoliteness strategies in order to attain variant effective and persuasive objectives rather than expressing hostile behaviors.

The results demonstrate delegitimization as a significant function behind the employment of different impoliteness strategies. Hence, such a function has been utilized by the micro-strategies: direct accusation, direct criticism, direct insult, explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect, ridiculing, and insinuation. To be more specific, American politicians can perpetrate certain impolite

acts to undermine the legitimacy of their political opponents, some press institutions or even some global actors.

Another remarkable function is concerned with damaging the public image or reducing the reputation i.e. American politicians attack the public image of their opponents portraying them as dishonest, weak and incompetent. and dishonest. This is mostly aimed at using the micro-strategies: direct insult, direct criticism, ridiculing, explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect as well as sarcasm.

Asserting dominance and power is another dominant function of impoliteness strategies. Using the micro-strategies: commanding, ridiculing, condescending, direct accusations as well as dismissive statements, the speaker pretends to have comprehensive knowledge, power and legitimacy whereas their rivals lack. On the other hand, Self-legitimization appears to be another recurring function behind impoliteness. To achieve this function, politicians may criticize or accuse their opponents weather politicians or journalists. This way, they can further justify their own political policy, support domestic decisions and defend military actions.

Mobilizing public support has also been perceived to be. another remarkable function of impoliteness. This is mostly arrived at vie direct accusations and explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect. Additionally, impoliteness strategies are used to control institutional discourse. Specifically, American politicians regulate discourse by redirecting topics, dismissing inquiries, interrupting and challenging some undesirable questions.

Also, Politicians have been found to use impoliteness strategies to disclaim responsibility. distance themselves from failures, change the topic as well as create skepticism in the press

7. Conclusions

This paper has come up with the following conclusions:

1. In American presidential press conferences, politicians primarily attack their opponents in a direct, clear and unambiguous way. This is indicated by the preference of use of bald on impoliteness and negative impoliteness super strategies which occupy about (80%). This validates hypothesis (3) which states "American officials tend to use impoliteness in a clear and direct manner. ".
2. American officials are less inclined to perpetrate indirect impoliteness when attacking opponents, i.e. subtle and indirect impoliteness is largely avoided. This is indicated by the fact that that the super strategies 'positive impoliteness' and 'withhold politeness' appear to be slightly utilized. This also supports hypothesis (3).
3. Each super strategy of impoliteness s selectively used to achieve certain communicative intention. This validates hypothesis (1) which states " impoliteness is strategically rather than randomly demonstrated, in American presidential press conferences".
4. Impoliteness is not mostly employed to express social hostility, personal stance or escalate conflict. It is rather used to achieve certain effective persuasive political goals. This refutes hypothesis (2) which states: "impolite responses are mainly employed to express social hostile behaviors in American presidential press conferences".
5. American politicians are less motivated to damage the interlocutors' social belonging since positive impoliteness has demonstrated only a marginal proportion.

6. The omission of politeness or expecting politeness is not a feature of American presidential press conferences i.e. American impolite responses are explicit and direct. Hence, the dominant micro-strategies of impoliteness are 'explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect' 'direct accusation' and 'direct criticism'.
7. The indirectness of impoliteness is strategically-rooted i.e. politicians intend to direct the audience to shape a negative image of their opponents without having any responsibility. This is demonstrated by the dominant use of the micro-strategy 'insinuation' (9.68%).
8. American politicians can perpetrate certain impolite acts to undermine the legitimacy of their political opponents.
9. American politicians attack the public image of their opponents portraying them as dishonest, weak and incompetent.
10. The American politicians can use the micro-strategies: commanding, ridiculing, condescending, direct accusations as well as dismissive statements in order to justify their own political policy, support domestic decisions and defend military actions.
11. American politicians' responses can exhibit impoliteness to disclaim responsibility, distance themselves from failures, change the topic as well as create skepticism in the press

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