

IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES IN ONLINE DISCUSSIONS
ON CHEATING IN A VIRTUAL REALITY GAME

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**IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES IN ONLINE DISCUSSIONS ON
CHEATING IN A VIRTUAL REALITY GAME**

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Abstract

This research study identifies the impoliteness strategies found in the forum's post comments discussing accounts of grief play activities mainly spoofing in a social game, Pokemon Go, and discusses how impoliteness is accommodated in the interactions among forum members in the conveyance of their perceptions towards cheating in social gaming. Data is collected from five complaint posts in a subforum, r/pokemongo, that discusses topics and contents related to Pokemon Go which is part of a megaforum, Reddit. Culpeper's (2011) Impoliteness Framework and the constructs of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) are used to analyse the data collected. The findings show that impoliteness occurrences found in online forums contains both the classic form of impoliteness formulae as well as adapted versions of classic impoliteness strategies to compensate the absence of impoliteness cues found through speech and face-to-face encounters. Based on CAT, impoliteness used by forum members in their interactions is shown to be non-accommodative towards the forum's etiquette through the exhibition of maintenance, overaccommodation and divergence communication behaviours. Instead, impoliteness occurrences found in the interactions are accommodative towards the topic that has the tendency to spark impoliteness. Thus, it is shown that individuals will find ways to be impolite despite various sanctions to prevent conflict and hostility in virtual communities. In this case where voicing of violations against principles of justice in social gaming is prevalent based on the discussion topic, impoliteness is contextually justified.

Keywords: impoliteness, interaction accommodation, gaming forum, spoofing, *Pokemon Go*

Abstrak

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti strategi ketidaksopanan dalam komen yang membincangkan peristiwa '*grief play*' khususnya '*spoofing*' dalam permainan sosial, *Pokemon Go*, dan membincangkan cara-cara ketidaksopanan dalam interaksi yang berlaku di kalangan ahli forum dalam penyampaian persepsi mereka terhadap ketidakakuran dalam permainan sosial. Data dikumpulkan dari lima pos aduan dalam satu subforum, r/pokemongo yang merupakan sebahagian daripada sebuah forum mega, Reddit, yang membincangkan topik dan kandungan berkaitan dengan *Pokemon Go*. Kerangka Ketidaksopanan Culpeper (2011) dan konstruk Teori Akomodasi Komunikasi (CAT) digunakan untuk menganalisis data yang dikumpul. Hasil kajian mendapati kejadian ketidaksopanan yang terdapat dalam forum dalam talian mengandungi formula ketidaksopanan klasik serta formula ketidaksopanan klasik yang telah diadaptasikan untuk mengimbangi ketiadaan isyarat ketidaksopanan yang dikesan melalui pertuturan dan komunikasi bersemuka. Ketidaksopanan yang digunakan oleh pengguna forum dalam interaksi mereka juga tidak akomodatif terhadap etika forum yang melarang penggunaan ketidaksopanan melalui paparan tingkah laku komunikasi '*maintenance*', '*overaccommodation*' dan '*divergence*'. Sebaliknya, isyarat ketidaksopanan itu akomodatif terhadap topik yang mempunyai kecenderungan untuk mencetuskan ketidaksopanan. Oleh itu, ini menunjukkan individu akan mencari jalan untuk berkelakuan tidak sopan walaupun pelbagai sekatan diwujudkan untuk mengelakkan konflik dan perselisihan dalam komuniti maya. Dalam kes ini, penyuaran pelanggaran terhadap prinsip keadilan dalam permainan sosial telah tersebar luasnya berdasarkan topik perbincangan, ketidaksopanan wujud secara kontekstual.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AR	Augmented Reality
CAT	Communication Accommodation Theory
CMC	Computer – mediated communication
MMO	Massively Multiplayer Online games
POGO	Pokemon Go Augmented Reality Game
VR	Virtual Reality

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Appendix A: Consent Form for Data Validation

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Impoliteness has always existed in societies all over the world. In situations where impoliteness is detected, a certain degree of perceived damage to personal reputation, prestige and self-esteem is often involved and offences in the form of emotional reactions would follow suit (Culpeper, 2011). Offences are taken as face, which is the emotionally sensitive self-concept that includes but not limit to the three components mentioned above, is perceived to be exposed (Culpeper, 2005). Culpeper (2011) defines impoliteness in terms of negativity in attitude that is shown towards certain behaviours in specific contexts.

Online communication is often abused by users to make inappropriate postings and start conflicts even though Censorship and Terms of Service are used to prevent them from degrading into impolite and offensive discourses (Goudet, 2013). Online users have always found ways to be impolite whereby censorship is often being counteracted (p. 8). Though impoliteness can be found in almost all online communications, impoliteness or incivility instances are more likely to develop over time when online users have got to know each other better and feel more comfortable expressing opinions over the time when conflicts are started or criticisms arise when they interact in groups (Papacharissi, 2004).

It is important to know that not all interactions done in online groups with common interests or benefits are virtual communities. The online interactions done in groups can be divided into two subcategories known as: (i) virtual communities (ii) virtual groups or teams (Li, 2004). Virtual communities are formed spontaneously by people with common interest, thrive on relationship development and persist in existence as long as members

in the groups do not disperse; Virtual groups on the other hand are formed by organisations mainly for problem-solving or task completion and the groups break up upon the completion of tasks or when problem is solved (p.2708). Both forms of communication can co-exist on the same online social media platforms such as Reddit, Facebook, Twitter and other newer online platforms however there might be slight difference in the interactions whereby the focus of this study is on interactions in the virtual community. Criticism and conflict have been identified in Herring's (2004) study as one of the main indicators present in virtual communities.

With the growth of massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs), online games become a complex domain where sociability is the key trait that distinguishes them from other traditional forms of stand- alone and local network online games as thousands of players can be accommodated to engage in a virtual space on the internet at real time (Taylor, 2009). Social games are easily accessible through the wide connectivity the Internet offers therefore their appeal could reach all people who have internet access in their digital and mobile devices.

Successful social games have their own communities which are kept strong not only through in-game communication mode but also interaction and ownership empowering communication mediums such as forums, blogs, youtube channels, Facebook page, face-to-face meetings and get-together events (Stuart, 2013). All these new forms of interaction are said to be fulfilling the role of interaction spaces for social support and networking known as third places that differ from work and home spaces because the contemporary society is relying lesser on physical social networking spaces (Steinkuehler & Williams, 2006). Some of these interactions in the third space were so consistent that they evolved to exhibit commonalities which are similar to the actual community such as

membership, relationships, shared values, cultures, social practices, commitments and generalized reciprocity and duration as some of observable social phenomena (Herring, 2004; William, 2009; Freeman, 2018; Simpson, Knottnerus & Stern, 2018). Hence, these are known as virtual communities.

As more varieties of social games are developed, more features are added such as text-based chatting systems complementing onscreen gameplay and the increasingly popular location-aware technologies known as location-based augmented reality feature (Keatin & Sunakawa, 2010; Licoppe & Inada, 2010). Location-based augmented reality games combine reality world experience and virtual world gameplay (Lee, Windlehart, Yip & Schmalz, 2017). The social aspect of these social games thus plays an even more important role in maintaining the virtual communities through their interactions in these communication mediums as well as bringing the virtual community offline when they gather at the same physical location during gameplay sessions.

Culpeper (2011) had hypothesized that individuals are more accepting towards impoliteness in contexts that trigger expectations of high impoliteness threshold and less potential of face loss. Online game forums perfectly provide such contexts for the manifestation of impoliteness especially for massively multiplayer online games (MMOG) where the greatest number of player-to-player interactions have been achieved through the internet that enables global connections. MMOG gaming forums enable experience sharing and exchange in the form of personal accounts that reflect individual perceptions, beliefs and feelings in anonymity (Hussain & Griffiths, 2009). The fostering of such virtual community provides vital emotional support, information, attention and energy for social gamers even though individuals might not know each other in the real-life setting or having lived in societies with different social norms and conventions. (Chappell,

Eatough, Davies, & Griffiths, 2006; Herring, Stein & Virtanen, 2013) Such form of anonymity allows the readjustment of impoliteness threshold based on the norm of interaction that is not bounded by established norms in the real-life societies.

As interactions involve language, it is thus interesting to explore the language patterns and how impoliteness is established in the interactions of these virtual communities on ownership-empowering communication platforms such as Reddit. To narrow down the scope of research, this current research focuses on posts on Pokemon Go's game subforum in Reddit r/pokemongo, one of the online discussion platforms for the virtual community of Pokemon Go which is not a built-in feature of the game.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Various studies on these MMOGs have found that forums function as one of the external communications that provides social support to players which are embedded within or outside the gaming virtual worlds (Herring, 2004; Steinkuehler & Chmiel, 2006; Kamel, 2014; O'Connor, Longman, Obst & White, 2015; Crenshaw & Nardi, 2016). These MMOG gaming forums allow players to create on-going content in the form of discussions, debates and arguments on strategies, solutions and choices as well as objections that oppose the 'communal wisdom' within the game dynamics. When these discussions become heated, the opinions and perspectives that are made in an argumentative and instant manner pervasive make perceived impoliteness more apparent (Jenkins, 2004). Research studies have been done to explore impoliteness in contexts and settings covering gaming content which are discussed live as the games are on-going (Diedrick, 2016; Graham & Hardeker, 2017). These discussions are mostly to guide teammates' real-time gaming actions and consequences.

As for social games which do not have built-in live chat feature within the game play, game discussions are set up in forum sites that allow the discussions of a variety of game-related and non-game related topics. A sub-forum section is usually set up and maintained by forum users who are playing the same social game to discuss about specific game content or a specific gaming issue. Therefore, these gaming sub-forums are sites for competitive debates and discussions to take place concerning mainly about various aspects which are related to the in-game content. Most of these discussion posts found could be categorized into topics that correlate with players' gaming motivations which consist of achievements, social connections and immersion (Yee, 2006; Hoffman & Nadelson, 2010). All these forum posts which are competitive have higher possibilities to threaten the sense of community in the virtual world when they degenerate into discourses which are offensive (Herring, 1994; Beason, 2013). Impoliteness could be found in most of these sub-forums but are rarely researched with assumptions that it is not of significant research value. Only several research studies have focused on impoliteness in terms of interactions in virtual communities that exist in forums.

This research thus focuses on one topic where discussions about players who use foul plays and cheating techniques are made. Such discussions tend to contain more impolite records as players comments are motivated by anger or annoyance towards negative behaviours such as cheating in gaming (Barnett, Coulson, & Foreman, 2009). Herring, Stein & Virtanen (2013) had also pointed out that less language-focused analysis of the new phenomena are done to compliment the other descriptive research done on new phenomena in the online virtual communities. Gamers who consist of mostly youths have traditionally been linked to aggressive behaviours (Anderson, 2004; Ko, Yen, Liu, Huang & Yen, 2009). However, the age range of social gamers using the forum is wider than traditional video games. It is interesting to see how impoliteness is presented in social

game forums and how impoliteness is received and used by forum users with different perceptions about impoliteness in their interactions given that they come from different generations of the community.

1.3 Purpose of Study

The research objectives in general explore how the virtual community of social gamers addresses and reacts to cheating which threaten their gaming experiences despite the interactions made might have broken the rules set to maintain the order of the virtual community in this case the game-related forum. Therefore, two specific objectives have been set to drive this study:

- i. To explore occurrences of impoliteness in a virtual community discussion subforum on social gaming (MMOG)
- ii. To document communication accommodation behaviours evident in responses to comments in the selected subforum/ interactions.

1.4 Research Questions

To achieve the objectives stated above, this research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What occurrences of impoliteness are found in a virtual community discussion subforum focusing on cheating accounts (grief plays) in social gaming (MMOG)?
2. How is impoliteness used by forum users to accommodate their communication in the form of responses to comments in the selected subforum interactions?

1.5 Significance of Study

This research enables the possible discovery of impoliteness strategies that are typically used by internet-based social gamers which might be slightly different from traditional gamers in their virtual community. The results add to the literature in terms of how impoliteness strategies used changes with the evolution of online gaming. There is still significantly less impoliteness literature on social games' virtual communities which have a virtual-reality feature and the interactions negotiated by the community of gamers who consist of a wider range of age groups. Pokemon Go is the pioneer of virtual reality social games that captures the attention of the public worldwide although the number of players is dropping. The impoliteness in game-related forums also deepens understanding of language patterns in virtual space interactions that can reflect a varying concept of proper and 'notable' behaviors among different gaming communities and a new form of social interaction in the virtual community (Mayra, 2017). Besides that, this research is a small step towards a better understanding of non-accommodation and potentially problematic communication which is put forward by Giles and Gasiorek (2013) in the online social context.

1.6 Limitations

This study looks at impoliteness and how it accommodates interactions in the forum without focusing on any target forum users (such as game developer, genuine game players or grief players). The findings of this study are thus limited to interactions of virtual community for Pokemon Go in Reddit subforum about spoofers. It does not reflect how impoliteness is used to accommodate interactions in other virtual communities for the same virtual reality game such as those on Facebook groups. Only comments with impoliteness occurrences that contain the exact or similar linguistic structures and connotations as in the theoretical framework are selected and analysed. The analysis does

not indicate that the overall nature of the interactions selected as data is offensive. As this research involves a small-scale data collection, the findings can only offer a novel direction for further research studies to replicate results on a larger scale. Therefore, caution should be practised when the suggestions of this research study are quoted.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

This section gives the definitions of key terms that are used to guide the elaboration of this research study.

Impoliteness

In this study, impoliteness refers to the negativity in attitude that is shown towards certain behaviours in specific contexts (Culpeper, 2011).

Grief players and grief plays

Grief players are disruptive online gamers known to threaten majority gamers' online experience and harm the online community by creating unpleasant and unsafe conditions for the others in order to gain self-pleasure or personal benefits (Foo & Koivisto, 2004; Foo, 2008). They exhibit traits such as being sadistic, narcissistic, aggressive and competitive within the online gaming context (Ladanyi & Doyle-Portillo, 2017).

Spoofing and Spoofers

Spoofing is a type of internet security attack that falsify information found online and internet users' data and privacy and spoofers are cyber attackers that carry out this type of attacks (Felten, Balfanz, Dean & Wallach, 1997; He, Meng & Qu, 2017). The attack permits three functions which are: i) forgery of website and webpages that imitates genuine ones ii) monitoring of victims' personal online activity and information such as

passwords and account numbers iii) creation of misleading and false data under the victim's name to internet servers and vice versa.

Spoofers are individuals who commit the act of spoofing. Spoofers in Pokemon Go mainly falsify their locations. Based on Zhao & Chen's (2017) findings, Pokemon Go players used various existing methods of location spoofing such as GPS spoofing, drone spoofing, VPN spoofing, and bots with location spoofing functions and even invented new spoofing methods as the game progresses. Under the third function mentioned in 'Spoofing' the real location setting known by its IP address is hidden and replaced with a target IP address where location data appeared to be sent from, and thus, bypassing geographical blocking systems that limits access to certain websites, videos and other media contents that are not licensed in different countries at different point of time (Top10.com staff, 2019). Therefore, players who spoof could appear as being in Tokyo although their actual location is in another country such as America. Spoofers are categorized as a type of grief players as they disrupt other gamers' gameplay.

MMO gaming forums

MMO gaming forums are forums that aid game players' social interaction and cultivate community development beyond the games.

MMO Games @ Social Games

2D or 3D video games that could be played online. They are also known as social games in newer versions that could be played on various digital devices such as the mobile phones and ipads as long as they are connected to the internet without being limited to only computers. Avatar creations that could interact with other individuals' avatars

globally are the game's distinctive features. The latest development of MMO games is the addition of an Augmented Reality (AR) feature.

Augmented Reality (AR)

Augmented Reality is an interactive experience of real-world environment where computer-generated perceptual information is used to enhanced real world objects

Virtual Reality (VR)

Virtual Reality is an immersive and interactive experience that allow individuals to interact with virtual worlds.

Pokemon Go

A popular social game with an augmented reality feature that could be played individually and in groups. The gameplay is guided by google maps which display actual streets and places where digital critter called pocket monsters (Pokemons) are caught as they appear beside roads and buildings on mobile screens when the game is logged in.

Web 2.0

Web 2.0 was first coined by O' Reilly (2009) is viewed as a social platform where applications are fully utilized to provide continuous services to people with improvement updates as the number of users increases. The services in Web 2.0 allow data consumption and re-mix from various sources that include those from users while giving out their own to be re-mix by others through participation in information sharing such as combinations of texts, Graphic Interchange Format where images could move (GIFs), embedded web links and tiny digital image to express feelings and ideas (emojis).

1.8 Summary

This chapter has covered the purpose and some background information related to the topic of the current study. The definitions of the keywords are used as a guide to ensure consistency throughout the process of writing my research therefore are vital to take note of. The next chapter will cover the theoretical framework and previous literature.

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CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the definitions of impoliteness and various literature that have been done to understand impoliteness. This is followed by introduction of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) and the mechanisms of social games together with past literatures. Conceptualizing of forums as virtual communities is also explained as to guide the direction and elaboration of my findings and discussion.

2.2 Definitions of Impoliteness

The earlier studies of impoliteness arose from the need to compile ‘universals in language usage’ human interactions which could not be predicted by Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Theory of Politeness due to their tendency to cause offence. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory had skipped researching the existence of impoliteness and instead focused on predicting ‘harmonious interactions’ which document the display of politeness. Furthermore, the theory is not well constructed conceptually and descriptively to define impoliteness (Eelen, 2001; Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann, 2003). In fact, impoliteness does not equate to politeness as the notion of impoliteness involves behaviours that invoke at least one negative emotion from participants of a conversation.

Impoliteness has been defined by various researchers in the past (Locher & Bousfield, 2008; Keinpointner, 1997). All these definitions differ in the fact that they have slightly different perspectives of recognizing intentions that are marked in impoliteness. Locher and Bousfield (2008) have defined impoliteness as ‘any form of behaviour that is face-aggravating in a particular context’ (p.3). More importance is placed on the intentions of speakers whereby ‘conflictive face-threatening acts (FTAs) are said to be performed

intentionally without any good reasons to do so (p.132). However, Bousfield's (2014) had defined that the success of impoliteness occurrence depends on whether the face is perceived to be damaged or threatened by someone in the receiver role where context has a crucial influence. Some researchers such as Lakoff (1989) and Terkourafi (2008) have associated impoliteness with rudeness (in Bousfield and Locher, 2008). Their definitions focused more on regulations of face which are based on Maxims proposed by Grice and Searle. Behaviours are considered rude and confrontational when no politeness strategies are used to meet the expectations in a certain context. The definition depends heavily on the receiver's tolerance towards impoliteness that varies according to the situations. Keinpointner (1997) has also pointed out that these definitions have simply categorized impoliteness as those which violate maxims of cooperative communication and have not addressed constraints that might come from situational and societal factors.

These impoliteness definitions failed to address that not all responses or behaviours which do not meet the expectations of politeness are necessarily confrontational. These also do not indicate that responses which meet the criteria of politeness are non-confrontational. Thus, giving rise to the studies on mock impoliteness where the participants of a conversation do not take the impoliteness seriously. Some form of impoliteness can still turn out to be either mock impoliteness or genuine impoliteness depending on whether the participants of a conversation perceive it as being offensive or just a form of polite teasing (Haugh & Bousfield, 2012; Mckinnon & Prieto, 2014). Haugh & Bousfield (2012) had termed such impoliteness as 'allowable offence' where such utterances risk higher probabilities of being labelled as impolite although the label would be cancelled when they are viewed as a sign of social supportiveness and non-impoliteness. The identification of mock impoliteness or banter is easier when it is accompanied by more

and frequent use of gestural cues while the absence of such cues caused doubt and uncertainties in individuals in a conversation (Mckinnon & Prieto, 2014).

Culpeper (2011) defines impoliteness as a negative attitude shown towards some particular behaviours displayed in specific contexts driven by three elements that make up the ideals of a social organization. These elements are expectations, desires and/or beliefs mainly on group identity mediation during interactions among people. Some behaviours are negatively viewed as impolite as they conflicted with the three ideals. These behaviours 'cause or are presume to cause offence' (Culpeper, 2011). Therefore, 'emotional consequences' are expected when these behaviours are exhibited (p. 254). Culpeper's definition is the most relevant to this study as it refers to attitudes and beliefs as the key point in recognizing intentions that mark behaviours, in this case, the choice of written language that is selected to portray the beliefs in the form of perceptions about grief plays and expectations of a fair game in the online gaming community.

2.3 Face and complaints

Face consist of attributes that determine whether the behaviours are evaluated positively or negatively for impoliteness occurrence to be identified as different people have difference evaluations of the same utterance or a written opinion. According to Culpeper (2011), face consist of not just the notions such as reputation, prestige and self-esteem but includes everything that an individual could relate to. Taking offence of certain impoliteness varies according to the amount of face claims by individuals. Impoliteness is established when it is viewed as an intentional attack or face damage to the others depends on both the speaker's intentionality and listeners' receptions (Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann, 2003; Bousfield, 2007).

Impoliteness in complaints about various topics in Internet-mediated communication is mostly related to social identity face because forums attracts people with the same interest or same views about a certain topic of interest. Based on Wijayanto, Hikmat, & Prasetyarini's (2018) finding about impoliteness, various impoliteness strategies used depended on status and social distance. Therefore, it is reliable enough to assume that impoliteness in the forums are mostly about values that are uphold or rejected by members of the forum community on discussion topics. This research follows Culpeper's (2011) guideline of identifying whether impoliteness involving social identity face is established based on the researcher's assessment on whether the interaction 'evokes understanding that something counters positives values which a participant claims not only to have in common with other members in a particular group but to be assumed by other participants as attacking their face'.

Johnson and Lewis (2010) findings had concluded that some profanities used in swearing such as 'hell', 'sucks', and 'oh shit' impacted the hearers less in terms of unexpectedness and surprise elements as they are phrased in such as way that the face is not directly threatened as compared to swear words targeted at specific person such as 'fuck off' and 'screw you'.

2.3.1 Previous Studies of Impoliteness in Computer-mediated communication (CMC)

Impoliteness studies on the internet have caught on the momentum in recent years. Studies have showed that impoliteness in computer-mediated communication (CMC) foster the sentiments of biasness as individuals with various contrasting viewpoints congregate in various discussion mediums (Yardi & Boyd, 2010; Groshek & Cutino, 2016). Yardi & Boyd (2010) found out that Twitter provides individuals the platform to display extreme emotions in haste on controversial topics instead of reasonable debates.

In fact, online impoliteness is found to be greater when it is sent from mobile devices (Goshek & Cutino, 2016). Such social phenomena can be explained in terms of the difference in content interface and impulsive affordance in similar study (Billieux, Van der Linden, & Rochat, 2008).

Perelmutter (2010)'s study explores the roles of power plays in which face was threatened and saved in online forums which in fact was an analysis of textual recounts and the responses to the recounts in the form of forum comments. The direction of the findings was not a direct power play between the individuals involved in the conflicts but the interactions between those who take either sides of individuals in the conflict recounts who are the 'mothers-in-law' and the 'daughters-in-law' under a common topic of complaints about mothers-in-laws. Thus, it is unclear whether the complainers' face was genuinely saved through complaints on the forum data selected as explained or are they merely posted to seek emotional support from others in the forum. In fact, face was not saved in the actual situation as 'perlocutionary effect' of impoliteness on target individuals is usually unavailable due to the difference in language use contexts where one is the recount of conflicts or uncomfortable events; and the other is a direct interaction between the complainers and target individuals (Upadhyay, 2010). Upadhyay's (2010) study on influences of identity on the impoliteness produced had suggested that impoliteness was made by individuals who view themselves as 'social agents' in supporting an ideology in terms of politics.

Many studies on computer-mediated communication (CMC) had only vaguely addressed the occurrence of impoliteness or those which go beyond impoliteness definitions in the context of virtual communities (Herring, Job-Sluder, Scheckler & Barab, 2002; Herring, 2004). Though Culpeper (2009) mentioned that the recurring words and structures in his

data perceived as impolite are found regularly in speech, many research studies have since used it in contexts where text is more prominent than speech (Papacharissi, 2004; Blitvich, 2010; LeBlanc, 2010). Impoliteness is partly inherent in linguistic expressions (Culpeper, 2011). The choice of computer mediated communication which is entirely posts from forum in this research provides the opportunity to identify the linguistic forms of impoliteness expressions that could conventionally trigger impoliteness attitude schemata in the written form. This is because forums like any other virtual places are contexts where people tend to be ambiguous in their expressions of impoliteness and politeness, where rules promoting politeness are frequently ignored and miscommunication occurrences are high (McKee, 2002; Wright, Graham and Jackson, 2016).

Several CMC studies seem to confuse virtual communities and interest groups (Nishimura, 2004; Shum & Lee, 2013). Nishimura's (2004) study looked at how impoliteness is captured in a CMC from a cultural point of view with the use of honorifics that influence much of the Japanese language produced online and the consequences of using impoliteness. Her findings build on the assumption that the interactions she had interpreted belong to an online community where the impoliteness had caused a major disruption to the community based on the instance where forum users left the forum thread. However, her conclusion that the online users wanted to keep an interactional distance seem to indicate that those users are not committed in viewing themselves as being part of the online community as the data that she had selected may have been from an interest group which depend solely on on-going information exchange and contents to keep the interactions going. Shum and Lee's (2013) findings had focused on determining whether some of the disagreement strategies used in the two forums are impolite based on interview questionnaires with some of the forum users. They had concluded that their findings indirectly reflected on the culture of interactions in the forums building on

assumptions that the forums are virtual communities. No details had been given in the research to support their assumptions that the data they study are from virtual communities as the topics of discussions selected which are about studying abroad and a news commentary. The two topics do not seem to link the members to a clearly defined common interest that would build a sense of community as they might be browsers who are reading forum posts just for news or information without any social attachment. The online interactions differ linguistically as the commitments given by members of these two forms of communications differ in terms of participation patterns, reciprocity and members' self-awareness as part of the same group or community (Herring, 2004).

2.4 Communication Accommodation Theory: Accommodation and Non-Accommodation Constructs

Communication Accommodation Theory was initially developed to get a better understanding of communication behaviours that individuals exhibit based on their own motivations to 'create, maintain or decrease' their social distance in interactions (Giles & Ogay, 2007). The theory was formed to cater mainly to explore negotiations and adjustments made in interactions which center around the principle that social interactions are established with a balance between the need to gain approval from the others (convergence) and the desire to stand out from the others or persist in one's own way of communicating (divergence). The theory focused more on interactions that are oriented towards successful interactions in varying contexts. The communication behaviours of distancing or drawing someone closer by adjusting the communicative behaviours is termed accommodation.

However, the adjustments in interactions that people make may become an issue sometimes as they might be inadequate or inappropriate. Interactions which are not

‘adequate’ or ‘appropriate’ are known as non-accomodation and these interactional adjustments could have ‘potentially serious consequences’ towards the progress of interactions whether they deteriorate into a heated discussion which result in more bashing of one another or a rather productive discussion which relate closely to the topic of discussion. According to Dorjee, Giles and Barker (2011), at the content level ‘misunderstandings’ and ‘miscommunications’ are a sign of non-accommodation but at the social level, the non-accomodation could be taken as impoliteness or fauz pas in intercultural studies. Therefore, the parameters from the accommodation and non-accommodation constructs are drawn and from Communication Accomodation Theory and adapted as an attempt to explore how impoliteness accomodates interactions in the game-related subforum for this research.

As Giles and Gasiorek (2013) had pointed out non-accommodation model is refined to give a better understanding of interactions that are potentially problematic, non-accomodation process is expected to occur more often than accommodation process in the research data. One proposition has been made for the non-accommodation which is:

- When the inference of a negative motive is made of the others’ non-accommodation, the interaction and speaker will be viewed less positively than when the non-accommodation is inferred to be a positive move or is made unintentionally

Non-accomodation is stated as communicative behaviours that participants have adjusted inappropriately in an interaction (Giles & Gasiorek, 2013). The catch phrase is that nonaccomodation is ‘not necessarily intentional’ as it depends on ‘subjective perception of conversational needs’ (Giles & Soliz, 2014). Consequentially, inappropriate

adjustment for communicative norms could lead to the interactions being labeled as 'rude and offensive' or to a lesser extent 'dissatisfying and problematic' (p. 3).

The four perceived communicative behaviours categorized under non-accommodation communication are:

1. Counter-accommodation (Divergence) : the alteration of speech or other forms of communication to move away and distance themselves from the communicative habits of their conversational partners.
2. Underaccommodation (Maintenance): lack of accommodative adjustments by individuals whereby their way of communication is maintained without regards to the characteristics of other interactants.
3. Overaccommodation: perception that a speaker exceeds or overshoots the level of communication behaviour necessary for a successful interaction.
4. Underaccommodation: perception that a speaker is not doing enough to implement the desired or needed level of communication in the interaction.

2.4.1 Previous studies on Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

CAT has potentials to offer a clearer explanation of individual's communicative actions in terms of politeness and impoliteness in conversational needs (Giles & Ogay, 2007).

The use of this theory had been conducted in various contexts mainly in the context of healthcare communication (Scholl, Wilson & Hughes, 2011; Baker, Gallois, Driedger, & Santesso, 2011).

Scholl, Wilson and Hughes (2011) highlight the lack of paralanguage proficiency and patient-physician language discordance in intercultural settings. The study has indirectly

proven that ‘non-linguistic’ factors such as ethnicity differences are not emphasized when the purpose of communication is to fulfil a different conversational need such as in health-related topics. Baker, Gallois, Driedger, & Santesso’s (2011) study focused on the influences of intergroup roles in the interactions between doctors and patients. However, the roles of the interactants are based in a formal setting where interactions are made between two different groups of individuals, mainly the experts and seekers of advice. The findings on interaction accommodation depended much on the nature of the intergroup has already been addressed as limitation in the study as there are influences of powerplays that come with the interactants’ roles. These research findings have only focused on the importance of clarity in verbal communication and conveyance of information that can be mutually understood for the common goal of healthcare service satisfaction. Emotional support was not clearly addressed as more focus is placed on informational support.

A small number of research studies had utilized CAT in computer – mediated context (Bunz & Campbell, 2004; Muir, Joinson, Cotterill & Dewdney, 2017). Bunz and Campbell’s (2004) study focused on politeness as a social cue. Politeness was found to accommodate communication in email responses effectively as communication participants could detect and reciprocate the politeness cues found in the original message by mirroring it. It also proved that effective interpersonal communication can be established in computer-mediated communication. Muir, Joinson, Cotterill & Dewdney’s (2017) study focused on the influence of social powers on the linguistic style of communicative behaviours. Their findings showed that individuals tend to associate the linguistic features used by those with high power role with negative interpersonal impressions when they try to accommodate a conversation.

However, no studies had ever been recorded to utilize this theory to study impoliteness in forums covering casual topics which acknowledge the emotional needs to release negative emotions such as frustration and anger. Therefore, this research attempts to adapt the accommodation and non-accommodation model to elaborate how impoliteness is accommodated in the virtual community of the social game.

2.5 Online forums as virtual communities

As computer networks are developed, a new form of communication exists entirely through computers in the early stages of development and is known as computer-mediated communication (CMC) for several decades. This form of communication had formerly been used for problem-solving, decision-making and information exchange by individuals across borders and different time zones mainly in the form of e-conferences and groups that exists in forums (Hiltz & Turoff, 1993; Hiltz & Wellman, 1997). These three aspects contribute to knowledge content is said to determine the value and definition of virtual societies. Virtual communities are characterized mainly by the knowledge content that members generate through social interactions (Lane & Lubatkin, 1998; Gray, 1999; Jacobs, 2000). Most of these studies had only focused on how social interactions bring about knowledge and content generation without much focus on other reasons for online interactions within the virtual communities. Virtual communities are deemed successful only when they generate better quality knowledge and content which could in turn generate profit that increase their economic values (Hagel & Armstrong, 1997). Chiu, Hsu & Wang's (2006) findings had shown that the social interaction ties increase the quantity but not quality of knowledge shared in a virtual community. Therefore, the social aspects of interaction that were not clearly mentioned might be the drive behind maintaining the virtual community besides knowledge and economic values.

Virtual learning facilities research studies are the first to elaborate on emotional support and sociability of online participants. Though the element of social presence is greatly reduced, evidences of social activities online from games, joke conferences and support groups in the early stage are found to provide emotional support and a sense of belonging (Preece, 2001; Mo & Coulson, 2008). Preece (2001) had included two important sociability measures which are social interaction support and user satisfaction into the framework which is effective in determining the success of virtual communities. The study had shown that virtual communities which are focused on information exchange and discussions disregard the appropriateness and how aggressive the comments over the content are whereas virtual communities which provide social support tend to discourage comments which are emotionally hurtful. Thus, virtual communities have been formed as a result of social interactions that are intentional based on individual content interests such as objects, ideas and events (Renninger, 2000; William, 2009). The formation of virtual communities differs from physically based communities which depends on the location, culture and upbringing where individuals are born into. Individuals are in control of their choices of virtual communities they wish to be a part of. However, such difference does not change the characteristics that are found in a community.

Hiltz and Wellman (1997) had stressed that CMC is not suitable to sustain virtual communities which builds on conflict and negotiation called 'social emotional tasks'. Their findings had pointed that online negative behaviours will be reduced when the length of their online interaction increase as the friendship of participants increase. However, currently there are various studies which had proven that certain virtual communities are indeed built on conflicts and violent interactions (Hagman, 2012; Goudet, 2013). Hagman's (2012) research on conflict talks in online communities such as 4chan and Something Awful had built on the grounds that an increasing number of

individuals are exhibiting conflicts seeking behaviours online nowadays. Both forum communities had not only tolerated anti-social behaviours, but instead encouraged these behaviours as part of the community's identity (p.40).

Hagman's (2012) research had focused mainly on the conflict aspects of the virtual communities touching slightly on the concept of face by Brown and Levinson. The findings had detailed social dominance and opinion acts in the two different forums where conflicts were identified in posts though the analysis for impolite exchange was not included. Though Goudet's (2013) study focused on censorship and how certain spellings of profanities could get around the mechanisms of censorship in virtual communities, one crucial point made which supports the study's findings is that it is in the nature of certain online users to use alternative spellings for profanities so that they can avoid censorships while they continue to insult others. De Oliveira's (2003) study on a male-dominated online community had shown that censorship to a certain interactional message resulted in the face loss. Therefore, the importance of members in the virtual community is reflected to have a major role in negotiation for acceptable boundaries in the absence of 'official rules and censorship' These studies highlights the struggles of online users in maintaining their freedom of speech and personal word choice preferences regardless of whether these comments are impolite or offensive. After all, impoliteness is counted as a normative behaviour in online conversations vital for online community building (Leblanc, 2010).

All these virtual communities that have been studied have a common feature where they could survive on built-up conflicts as the main feature of their communities. Most research studies seldom study posts written by virtual communities linguistically for impoliteness.

However, Susan Herring's various studies (1996a, 1996b) were some of the earliest work which address the need to explore CMC language practices and influences of technology on social and context online that form 'social interaction and social identities' with different linguistic variabilities (in Androutsopoulos, 2006). It was her notion of virtual community that plays an important role in highlighting the need to apply sociolinguistic methods in the research of online interactions (p. 3).

Herring's (1996) study had acknowledge the essence of impoliteness in the form of conflict in the reoccurring patterns of successful and longer lasting online groups when she observed the virtual communities from various aspects. Her research on impoliteness was not elaborated enough to determine how impoliteness was used in the virtual communities as the nature of her data focused only on whether gender influence the way impoliteness is. However, it is still worthy to mention that it is from her study that the finer details and nature of virtual communities are better defined and documented.

Herring (2004) had come up with six criteria which could be used to determine whether the group of online presences are just interest groups or genuine virtual communities.

These are:

- 1) active, self-sustaining participation; a core of regular participants
- 2) shared history, purpose, culture, norms and values
- 3) solidarity, support, reciprocity
- 4) criticism, conflict, means of conflict resolution
- 5) self-awareness of group as an entity distinct from other groups
- 6) emergence of roles, hierarchy, governance, rituals

The six criteria have been used as a checklist to ensure the data that had been selected for this research represents interactions of a virtual community and not just any online interaction for validity purposes.

2.6 Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOs) Evolution: Social Games

The initial version of Massively Multiplayer Games consists of videogames with either Two-Dimensional (2D) or Three – Dimensional (3D) that are played online. These video games known as MUDs (Multi-User Dungeons) have distinctive features such as functions that enable creation of avatar (digital characters) by individuals which could interact with the gaming software and with other individuals' avatars (Steinkuehler & Williams, 2006). According to Bartle (2004), the virtual worlds created in these games are computer simulated environments which can be affected by countless individuals who are playing it simultaneously. They are called players and not users because they have to achieve game-based goals that are induced in the virtual environment through gameplay which are typical of the First Age online games. Most of these First Age MUDs are text-based where progressive development has now added newer advanced features such as allowing millions of players instantaneously and role-playing elements in the virtual worlds known as massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) or Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs). All these MMOGs existed completely in the virtual world and rapidly become heavily reliant on sociability to expand the player community and maintain the game popularity.

These later versions of MMOG games are part of the new genre of games developed which are better known as social games. The design of social games adapts a business modal where gamers can play the games for free unless they want extra features called 'virtual products' which can be obtained through real-world payment, in-game challenges,

trading between gamers and virtual currency (International Social Games Association, 2014). In the attempt to define social gaming sector, the International Social Games Association's (2014) report had highlighted that one of the key difference of this game genre from the traditional games is that gamers are able to access a complete collection of high quality game content that enhance their gameplay experience prior to spending money on the game for their premium features. This concept is known as the freemium pricing model. They attract a wider range of audience including the older and the younger with a more casual way of game play (Söbke, Corredor & Kornadt, 2013; Schell, 2008). In comparison to traditional video games, these games are proven to bring about much more active interaction between online and off-line worlds. This game genre has profound impact on players' cultural values and ideologies through multiple channels of interaction about the same game context. For instance, social gamers from China who became part of the virtual learning communities of World of Warcraft adapted a sense of equality in their learning culture despite having a 'strong hierarchical component' cultural practice in the physical world (Guo, 2018).

The latest progress in these online games combines virtual worlds with reality for game enhancement which can be played on various electronic and mobile devices connected to the internet. Thus, the evolution of interactions between gamers have potentially more to offer in terms of how impoliteness influence interactions in the virtual communities. The current research investigates a new variant of MMOG with such virtual-reality feature known as Pokemon Go. Being a new variant MMOG, Pokemon Go excludes an in-game chat feature which is part of all the other new generation MMOGs while relying on external forums to sustain and support its communities globally.

2.7 MMO Forums

Herring, Stein & Virtanen (2013) had stated that older CMC modes such as forums persisted into the era of Web 2.0 (refer to Key Terms) virtual environment without any significant changes although the language could 'persist, adapt or arise anew' to meet the evolving needs of virtual communities. Such is the relevance of MMO forums. The MMOG and MMO community forums are interdependent therefore both aid the understanding of game players' social interaction and community development. The virtual presence of a common meeting place is what a MMO community forum represents for the game players. It is the primary 'communication hub' for players of the same game to interact with each other even if they are offline or been locked out of the game (Pierce, 2011). MMO forums serve as platforms for players to cultivate a sense of community beyond the game (Braithwaite, 2014). The emotional sentiments to MMO forums are such that premature release of statement or problems that arisen in the MMO game will bring about heated discussions in the forums where members flood the forum with complaints and awkward questionings (Bartle, 2016). At the meantime, in forums where game account IDs are not required for forum logins, topics that discuss activities and applications illegal or disapproved by game developers and player communities are also made openly.

For a person to contribute in an MMO forum, they must have prior game play experience before they are able to contribute to forum content and topics related to the game. Rice (2006) identified seven basic types of individuals that are interchangeable with one another when gamers assume the role of members in MMO forums. They may become one of the following:

- 1) the silent majority: members who are rarely active and post only to introduce themselves and ask a few questions.

- 2) Lurkers: are active readers of forum posts who are up-to date with events, arguments and discussions. They will frequently state their opinions and thought but avoid participating in on-going conversation.
- 3) Trolls: are forum members who will contribute content that stir up conflicts and inflict anger with possible motives of attention - seeking or damaging the forum community.
- 4) Prolifics: forum members that comment on every post in all topics related or unrelated to the game with motives of posting as many comments as they could. Some would write lengthy posts.
- 5) Mediator /counselor: forum members who would provide information and tips to guide newcomers and resolving conflicts and arguments by compromising and stating the logic. They seem interested in sustaining the growth and development of the forum community.
- 6) Egoists: members that like to be the focus or the centre of attention in a discussion post. They are also self- deprecating just to get compliments and are likely to post threats to leave the gaming community.
- 7) Leader: opinions they give are viewed as important by other MMO forum members and would make a huge impact on the community whereby their decision to leave will be follow suit by some groups of forum members. This type of individual usually correlates with the role they play in MMO games where they are also influential as guild or clan leaders.

Adapted from Rice (2006; p.82)

Given that the types of forum members have been identified, the research conducted might shed light on whether there is any relation between impoliteness and the individual types mentioned.

2.8 Grief plays

Grief plays are characterised by disruptive behaviours of online gamers. They originate from trolls who share similar characteristics in making online experiences of the others unpleasant whether intentionally or unintentionally in the context of online gaming. However, players doing grief plays may or may not enjoy 'eliciting' reactions from other players as some stem from their own selfish means of boosting their own gaming experience without considerations of the benefits that other players might have lost such as greed plays (Foo & Koivisto, 2004). Though the intent may not be there, the disruptive behaviours had elicited the annoyance and discomfort of other players. It is still considered a form of subtle impoliteness (p. 2). Therefore, in line with Culpeper's (2005) impoliteness definition, the hearer's perceptions of intentionality also determine that impoliteness is established when hearer perceives the behaviour as an intentional face-attack (Culpeper & Hadaker, 2017).

2.9 Summary

This chapter has covered discussions on impoliteness and Communication Accommodation Theory by providing literature gaps which could possibly be filled in this research. The concepts of MMOG and previous studies that relate it to impoliteness have also been provided to give a clearer view of how this research can further pursue discovery in this direction. The next chapter will cover the methodology that I have used to carry out this research.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter thus covers details of research samplings used, methods and instruments of data collection, data analysing procedure as well as data presentation explanation of the research. Following the qualitative approach that is used for this research, this chapter discusses the two theoretical frameworks used to guide this study of impoliteness in a MMOG game forum which are Culpeper's (2011) conventionalized impoliteness formulae and Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT).

3.2 Theoretical framework

3.2.1 Culpeper's Conventionalized Impoliteness Formulae

Culpeper (2011) has also hypothesized that impoliteness formulae that are more difficult to neutralize in various contexts are formulae related to higher offence. Impoliteness in the virtual places is independent of any occasion in cases such as flaming but is still dependent on the contexts for the effect it caused. Culpeper (2011) had also included the groupings of impoliteness metapragmatic rules called items which can accommodate all the impoliteness strategies that he had proposed (p.109). Culpeper's five super-strategies are not included as it is more suited for face-to-face communication. The research data came from a virtual community where their offline relationship could not be determined to justify the use of super strategies.

Therefore, to explore impoliteness strategies found in the gaming forum, only Culpeper's (2011) Nine Conventionalized Impoliteness Formulae are used as the main framework for data collection for the first research question shown in Table 3.1. The data collected based on this framework would also be discussed in terms of the intensity of offence the expressions carry for the second research question.

Table 3.1: Culpeper's (2011) Conventionalised Impoliteness Formulae

Types of conventionalized impoliteness formulae	Examples
Insults	<p>i) Personalized negative vocatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [you][fucking/rotten/dirty/fat/little] • [moron/fuck/plonker/dickhead/berk/pig/shit/bastard/loser/liar/minx/brat/slut/squirt/sod/bugger/etc] • [you] <p>ii) Personalized negative assertions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [you][are] [so/such a] [shit/stink/thick/stupid/bitchy/bitch/hypocrite/disappointment/gay/nuts/ nuttier than a fruit cake/ hopeless/pathetic/fussy/terrible/fat/ ugly/etc.] <p>iii) Personalized negative references</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [your][stinking/little] [mouth/act/arse/body/ corpse/hands/guts/trap/breath/etc.] <p>iv) Personalized third-person negative references</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [the] [daft bimbo]
Pointed criticism/complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [that/this/it] [is/was] [absolutely/extraordinary] [bad/rubbish/crap/ horrible/terrible/etc.]
Unpalatable questions and/or presupposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you make my life impossible? • Which lie are you telling me? • What's gone wrong now? • You want to argue with me or you want to go to jail? • I'm not going to exploit for political purposes my opponent's youth and inexperience.
Condescensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [that] ['s/is being] [babyish/childish/etc]
Message enforcers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen here (preface) • You got [it/that] • Do you understand [me]? (tag)
Dismissals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [go][away] • [get][lost/out] • [fuck/piss/shove] [off]
Silencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [shut][it]/[your] [stinking/fucking/etc.] [mouth/face/trap/etc.] • shut [the fuck] up
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [I'll/I'm/ we're] [gona] [smash your face in/beat the shit out of you/box your ears/bust your fucking head off/straighten you out/etc.] [if you don't] [X] • [you'd better be ready Friday the 20th to meet with me/ do it] [or][else][I'll] [X] • [X] [before I] [hit you/strangle you]
Negative expressives (eg. curses, ill-wishes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [go] [to hell/hang yourself/fuck yourself] • [damn/fuck] [you]

3.2.2 Communication Accommodation Theory

To answer the second question on how impoliteness is established and negotiated among forum users of the virtual community on grief plays in MMO gaming, Communication Accommodation Theory is used to determine how impoliteness has been established specifically evaluated in terms of accommodation and non-accommodation (Giles & Ogay, 2007). This research attempts to adopt communication strategies of accommodation, over accommodation, and non-accommodation such as convergence and divergence to elaborate the establishment and negotiation of impoliteness touching on the sociability of the virtual community of social game.

3.2.2.1 Constructs of Communication Accommodation Theory

Gallois, Ogay & Giles (2005) had pointed out that Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) is so complicated that research studies adopting its constructs need to provide specifications and conditional predictions of various accommodation and non-accommodation occurrences within the context that is being researched.

The negotiation and establishment of impoliteness constructs in Communicative Accommodation Theory (CAT) could not be defined by any propositions which have been given in other research studies (Gallois, Ogay & Giles, 2006). I have adapted some conditions defined in linguistics accommodation for each construct to suit the context of my research study as shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Adaptations of Communicative Accommodation Theory (CAT)

Constructs of CAT	Prediction of Communication Accommodation conditions in the context of the current research data for impoliteness
Accommodation: Interactants regulate their communication by adopting a specific linguistic code in order to appear more alike to each other.	Adapted Accommodation: Interactions between forum members adapt impoliteness in their comments that share the same sentiments towards spoofers and the gaming company.
Non-accommodation: Interactants regulate their communication by adopting a specific linguistic code in order to appear distinct from each other through the types of non-accommodation behaviours as follows:	Adapted Non-accommodation: Interactions between forum members adapt impoliteness in their comments that appear to deviate from sentiments that initiated discussions/complaints about spoofers and spoofing as follows:
1) Counter-accommodation: through divergence/hostile moves	1) Adapted Counter- accommodation: interactions show strong support of the act of spoofing and are defensive of the spoofers
2) Underaccommodation: through maintenance and unempathetic moves	2) Adapted Underaccommodation: Interactions show indifference or moderate level of dissatisfaction in their opinions about spoofer and spoofing. They maintain their views of a certain degree of reservations about the spoofers despite the post threads were written to bash spoofers, spoofing and the gaming company.
3) Over-accommodation: through patronizing or ingratiating moves	3) Adapted Over-accommodation: interactions show extreme hostility towards those spoofers and spoofing to the point that could result in flaming or cyberbullying the comments which do not share the same sentiments as theirs. These interactions over-accommodate the subforum's intolerance towards spoofers and spoofing to the point of showing extreme hatred.

3.3 Data Source

Data on impoliteness is collected from a megaforum named Reddit where Pokemon Go MMO forum is one of the sub forums that discusses topics and contents related to Pokemon Go. Reddit was founded in 2005 by Steve Huffman and Alexis Ohanian with a growing online community of over 330 million monthly active users, hosting over 138 thousand of active online communities to date (Reddit, 2018). Forum users can interact with communities of the same interests in various sub forums that are organized with a tag label *r/* in front of the topics mentioned. The forum offers features where content sharing is available in both meaningful and meaningless discussions and humour. These interactions are community-regulated where comments and posts could be upvoted and downvoted based on how appealing they are to the members of the online communities.

Based on the findings by Singer et. al. (2014), Reddit has been transformed into a self-referential community where forum members crowdsource¹ their own textual content and user-generated images whereby most images used in the forum were hosted by Reddit's own image hosting service, called *Imgur*. The sub-forum called *r/pokemongo* which is the platform where all Pokemon Go game-related discussions are made is selected. This subforum has currently 2 million community members with approximately 4.8 thousand active members browsing the forum daily. The virtual community in this forum had appeared to have low tolerance towards impoliteness as stated in its forum etiquette with regards to impoliteness:

1) Please be polite here, even when you are upset or disagreeing with someone

* Note that we do not expect you to just avoid being rude, but we expect you to try and actually be polite. Swearing is okay but there is a difference saying "Fuck you" and "Fuck my Dragonite ran"

¹ Crowdsourcing is an action of giving tasks to large groups of individuals of the general public to complete rather than employees within a company for instance, seeking help online.

2) In the interest of promoting quality submissions and discussion, please avoid posting any of the following text submissions:

- Text posts made simply to state an opinion or fact rather than generate discussion
- Posts made primarily to leave a basic complaint rather than generate discussion
- Posts for which an active megathread exists—for example, simple questions should be posted in the Newbie megathread, and complaints in the Dear Niantic thread

(quoted from r/pokemongo rules, 2019)

However, somehow posts such as the ones in the data of this research showed slight mismatch of impoliteness tolerance as the rules have been altered few months ago. The data collected and studied in this research still exists on the links that are shown and are being archived. Therefore, the data set has stayed relatively unchanged since they were posted as forum members could not add on to or delete comments for the posts.

Herring's (2004) six criteria of virtual communities had also been used to ensure data validity and that impoliteness in the forum interactions can be studied and understood from the sociolinguistic perspective of a virtual community. Reddit's megaforum had fulfilled all the criteria as shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Virtual Community Criteria-matching of Reddit Megaforum

Herring's (2004) six criteria of virtual community	Research findings on Reddit's characteristics as a virtual community
active, self-sustaining participation; a core of regular participants	Participatory approach is used in the forum as their users can also assume the roles of 'media producers'. Active participatory culture was found to be present in Reddit where users connect with the other users by performing certain activities more frequently together. (Massanari, 2015; Moore & Chuang, 2017)
shared history, purpose, culture, norms and values	Reddit is referred to as both a culture and many cultures due to the existence of complex interactions that go between Subreddits. (Massanari, 2015)
solidarity, support, reciprocity	Reddit forum users found a 'sense of identity authenticity' and acceptance in the community where they share personal information to seek 'connectedness, social support and life satisfaction' through confession posts. (Miller, 2020).
criticism, conflict, means of conflict resolution	Offensive content that is allowed cultivates the cultivation of interactions that are anti-feminism and misogynistic activism which cause much online harassment (Massanari, 2017)
self-awareness of group as an entity distinct from other groups	Users of Reddits set themselves aside by being known as the Redditors (Moore & Chuang, 2017)
emergence of roles, hierarchy, governance, rituals	Registered community members can submit content. Top users have autonomy to shape or close part of the site which are not theirs. Volunteer users and moderators can monitor discussions in the forum. Based on Brown & Buchholtz (2015), large parts of Reddit web site were shut down by moderators in their protest of the sudden dismissal of a Reddit employee.

3.4 Methodological advantages and disadvantages

Data collection procedures have been done to ensure the data of interest are naturally produced by members of forum with specific interest serving common purposes which give rise to a specific phenomenon that could be elicited from text analysis of the conversation. According to Herring (2004), sampling collected by phenomenon based on 'interaction unit' from participants' authentic use establishes internal validity in terms of coherence of linguistic patterns that have emerged. The methods used hopefully are allowed for generalizability of results to different MMO-related virtual communities (Golafshani, 2003). However, the validity of the methodologies used could only be expanded in MMO – related virtual communities which suit all the six criteria of virtual communities proposed by Herring (2004) as they have a continuous maintenance of active members which makes the virtual community strong and stable. Be noted that the research data used comes from online archives as the Reddit forum has moved all its sub-forums to a bigger web domain since 2017.

3.5 Sampling

3.5.1 Data Selection

As Pokemon Go is a location – based augmented reality mobile game, the game's main attraction is the merging of the player's location in the real world to that of a virtual reality world where they are free to capture monsters, battles and collect rewards. This allows people to get a chance to move about and wonder around places that they have never explored. The novel experience this game has offered could not be replicated or surpassed by other MMO games until now due to its unique feature of using GPS (Global Positioning Service) to combine the virtual world and real world location (Paavilainen, Korhonen, Alha, Stenros, Koskinen, & Mayra, 2017). However, this game's strength is also its main weakness in causing the loss of its popularity as some players succeed in

cheating and misusing GPS navigators to get the upper hand and advance their gaming experiences. It gives an impactful negative gameplay experience for other players who are not cheating (Paavilainen, et. al., 2017). Cheating in online games become ‘an issue of moral significance’ as the gaming experiences are valuable to the players (Kimppa & Bissett, 2005). Therefore, forum posts that contain discussion about the most despised form of cheating or grief plays known as spoofing are selected purposefully to probe for impoliteness. The post selection is determined by typing the keyword ‘spoofers’ in the search engine to generate posts with titles that contain the keyword ‘spoofers’. Then, posts with more than 20 impolite comments were selected to explore how impoliteness is conveyed through interactions that were made. With this guideline, five complaint posts which contain more than 20 impolite comments have been selected for the purpose of this study. The data collected were comments made between 2016 and 2017 as the game was at its peak in terms of downloads and popularity. Many gamers took the game seriously during that period therefore discussions about in-game happenings were heated when spoofing was discovered as an easy way to cheat in the game.

My data on gaming-related forum posts is also selected as they fulfil several data requirements for this research as below:

- i) Topic of conversation revolves around the disapproval of grief plays in MMO game
- ii) Contains impoliteness (that fits Culpeper’s 2011 Impoliteness Formulae)
- iii) Interactions that are motivated by anger or annoyance and/or are non-accommodative to the topic of conversation or other comments about spoofers. (based on the adopted version of Communication Accommodation Theory)
- iv) Are not censored by moderators at the point of data collection.

Five complaint posts which had been found using the keywords 'spoofers' in the search engine have been purposefully selected as they contain more than 20 impolite comments.

These posts are:

1. Niantic's top priority should be stopping GPS spoofers, they're utterly ruining gyms for legit players (Complaint 1)

https://www.reddit.com/r/pokemongo/comments/56xgc2/niantics_top_priority_should_be_stopping_gps/?limit=500 X

2. Spoofers Have Become Incredibly Brazen (Complaint 2)

https://www.reddit.com/r/pokemongo/comments/65vqg7/spoofers_have_become_incredibly_brazen/ X

3. It looks like only spoofers got invited to the first Ex-Raid in my town!! (Complaint 3)

https://www.reddit.com/r/pokemongo/comments/7316c9/complaint_it_looks_like_only_spoofers_got_invited/ X

4. In a couple of hours legal players gave up and spoofers won again (Complaint 4)

https://www.reddit.com/r/pokemongo/comments/6izeqr/complaint_in_a_couple_of_hours_legal_players_gave_up/ X

5. I encountered a spoofers on the bus today. I'm livid. X (Complaint 5)

https://www.reddit.com/r/pokemongo/comments/65sjxn/i_encountered_a_spoofers_on_the_bus_today_im_livid/?limit=500

There are a total of 1011 comments for the five posts with 191 number of impolite comments identified. Some posts contain more impolite comments than others due to the total number of comments found under the post.

Table 3.4: Number of Impolite Comments in Five Selected Complaint Posts

Posts	Total no. of comments	Total no. of impolite comments
Complaint 1	346	54 (28.2%)
Complaint 2	137	19 (9.9%)
Complaint 3	123	36 (18.8%)
Complaint 4	110	18 (9.4%)
Complaint 5	295	64 (33.5%)
Total	1011	191 (100%)

3.6 Data Analysis

The current research utilized the classical content analysis paradigm of "coding and counting". First, I collect all the impoliteness occurrences from all the five thread posts. Comments under the discussion posts where impoliteness occurrences are found are then coded using Culpeper's (2011) Impoliteness Formulae to determine the impoliteness strategies and how they are accommodated among the members of the forum community. Herring (2004) had stated that clear operationalizing and definition of coding which is applied to data ensures empirical rigor. Therefore, all impoliteness strategies have been coded into abbreviations as shown in Table 3.5 for consistent coding.

Table 3.5: Coding of Impoliteness Strategies

Impoliteness Strategies	Code
Insults	I
Pointed criticisms/complaint	PC/C
Unpalatable question/presupposition	UP/P
Condescensions	C
Message enforcers	ME
Dismissals	D
Silencers	S
Threats	T
Negative expressives	NE

Then, interactional analysis is used to explore how impoliteness accommodate interactions in the virtual communities. This analysis explores how impoliteness is used in the responses towards the target posts on the main threads. Gallois, Ogay & Giles (2005) had pointed out that Communication Accommodation Theory is so complicated that research studies adopting its constructs need to provide specifications and conditional predictions of various accommodation and non-accommodation occurrences within the context that is being researched.

As the constructs in Communicative Accommodation Theory could not be defined by any particular propositions which have been given in other research studies, I have adapted some propositions for each construct to suit the context of my research study (see Table 3.2 for difference between actual and adapted propositions).

3.6.1 Reliability and validity of coding and analysis

To ensure reliability of data, authentic data was extracted from Reddit online forum which can be accessed through links to the online posts as shown in 3.5.1: Data Selection. To ensure validity of research data, a pilot test was carried out. My pilot test data analysis categorization has been validated by an expert in Pragmatics. (Refer to Appendix A)

3.6.2 Pilot test

A pilot test has been done to determine the types of impoliteness strategies found in the subforum r/pokemongo. Most of the impoliteness strategies are found from the comments under the thread post with the heading ‘Cheaters aren’t even trying’. This post appeared in reddit’s search engine results in r/pokemongo after the other threads with more comments which have been used as my research data. Many impolite occurrences which are equivalent to or has the similar word patterns as the examples found in Culpeper’s categories of the strategies are categorised accordingly. The equivalents of my data to that of Culpeper’s data in each category of impoliteness strategy are shown in Table 3.6 whereas the number of occurrences is shown in Table 3.7.

Table 3.6: Equivalents of Impolite Occurrences in the Pilot Test to that of Culpeper’s Samples for each Impoliteness Strategy

Types of impoliteness strategies	Culpeper’s impoliteness formulae	Impolite occurrences in my pilot test data
Insults	i) Personalized negative vocative [you][fucking/rotten/dirty/fat/little] [moron/fuck/plonker/dickhead /berk/pig/shit/bastard/loser/liar/minx/brat/slut/squirt/sod/bugger/etc]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>you cheating scumbag</u>
	ii) [you][are][so/such a] [shit/stink/thick/stupid/bitchy /bitch/hypocrite/disappointment/gay/nuts/ nuttier than a fruit cake/ hopeless/pathetic/fussy/terrible/fat/ ugly/etc.]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • let you be <u>a fat nerd piece of shit</u> for years behind a screen...
Pointed criticism	[that/this/it][is/was][absolutely/extraordinary][bad/rubbish/crap/horrible/ terrible/etc.]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reporting someone without 100% certainty <u>is</u> also <u>a dickmove</u> • This skepticism <u>is</u> <u>ridiculous</u>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making excuses to cheat <u>is dumb</u>
Unpalatable question/presupposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you make my life impossible? • Which lie are you telling me? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you be any more obtuse? • <u>do you</u> think I saw ANYONE ?
Condescension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [that][‘s/is being][babyish/childish/etc] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its* funny how <u>dim, dull and sad</u> these peoples* lives are.
Message enforcer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen here (preface) • You got [it/that] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I WANT FUCKING SPOOFERS TO BE BANNED ASAP PLEASE NIANTIC WHAT AFE YOU WAITING FOR?
Dismissal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [go][away] • [get][lost/out] • [fuck/piss/shove] [off] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Fuck off spoofer</u> • <u>I don't care</u> about your ethics speech. • Most spoofing versions have coins disabled so most of us cared less about gyms <u>whatsoever</u>.
Silencer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shut [the fuck] up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Shut the fuck up</u>, spoofers have no reasons
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [I'll/I'm/we're][gona][smash your face in/beat the shit out of you/box your earsbust your fucking head off/straighten you out/etc.][if you don't][X] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My GF became so mad that she likely would <u>smash their phone</u>...
Negative expressives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [damn/fuck] [you] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you cheating scumbag <u>fuck you</u>. • And this isnt isolated with bushes and <u>shit</u> • Last time he complained about cheaters I called him out and he threw <u>a big dumb bitch</u> fit

The complete list of pilot test data is shown in Appendix B. Comments on the topic of spoofing are found to contain many strong words which have the tendency to provoke and offend. Though the total number of comments found in the pilot test data is less than the other posts on the same topic, the number of impoliteness occurrences (31) found from a total of 146 comments on the post is quite high as 21.2% of the comments are impolite.

Table 3.7: Number of impolite occurrences

Types of impoliteness strategies	Number of occurrences
Insults	3
Pointed criticism	4
Unpalatable question/presupposition	8
Condescension	1
Message enforcer	3
Dismissal	4
Silencer	2
Threats	1
Negative expressives	5

Based on the findings of my pilot test, these are the impoliteness strategies that I have expected to find before analysing my actual data. Though some impoliteness data do not exactly match the conventionalised impoliteness formulae, the words used which has similar meaning and appeared offensive would also be included in my actual data collection. The data from this pilot test is not included in my data analysis as it is just a reference of what I expect to find in my data. This data comes from another post within the subforum r/pokemongo which also appeared when I searched for posts using the keyword ‘spoofers’.

As shown in Table 3.7, unpalatable questions and presupposition (8) seem to be used most frequently in the comments in this post thread with the title ‘Spoofers... C'mon Niantic’ followed by negative expressives (5) whereas pointed criticism and

dismissal occurred 4 times each. Insults, threats silencers and condescension occurred less frequently.

3.7 Ethical Issues

The comments chosen from the particular forum are public and freely available for even non-member to view. The terms and services (ToS) in the forum do not claim copyright of the content produced by its members (see Appendix B). The researcher chooses not to log in to the forum account to ensure that data collected are strictly limited to comments which are public. Names of commenters are omitted to ensure ethical representation of data without making the commenters' identity identifiable. No consent is required to analyse the online text data as it is public content which is easily searchable and retrievable via google search drive. All these considerations are made based on the guidelines by Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) Ethical Decision-Making document (Version 2.0) on the category of Special Interest Forums (Markham & Buchanan, 2012).

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the findings and discussion of the current research. The findings will be elaborated in two parts which are based on two different theoretical framework that offer a clearer description of how impoliteness is accommodated in online interactions. Part 1 shows the findings of conventionalized impoliteness strategies embedded in the comments. Part 2 elaborates how impoliteness is used to accommodate comments which function as responses towards previous comments in the flow of interactions of the five selected posts. The short excerpts of written comments are taken from the 5 selected complain threads in the forum, r/pokemongo on the same topic about spoofers.

4.2 Findings on conventionalized impoliteness strategies

Though both conventionalized and non-conventionalized impoliteness strategies are found, this research will only focus on conventionalized impoliteness strategies. The labelling of impoliteness strategies found in the data is guided by Culpeper's (2011) theory that conventionalized impoliteness formulae are context spanning. The concept of context spanning that the offence caused are less likely to be neutralized despite the lack of prosodic cues such as changes in intonation and body language is highlighted as the findings have also shown new language patterns that could present some of these prosodic cues clearly through intentional descriptions in the research data.

To answer the research question one, almost all the impoliteness strategies mentioned by Culpeper (2011) are found in the five complaints that were chosen. A total of 191 impoliteness occurrences in the comments have been identified and coded as applying different impoliteness strategies. The five complaints have different number of comments

with varying lengths with more than 20 occurrences of impoliteness in the overall. As no criteria was set to ensure all impoliteness strategies should be available in each complaint, the comments under some complaint do not contain all the impoliteness strategies proposed by Culpeper (2011). Table 4.1 summarized the research findings.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Impoliteness Strategies in Five Forum Complaints

Complaints	1 (54)	2 (19)	3 (36)	4 (18)	5 (65)	Total number for each type of impoliteness formulae
Pointed criticisms/complaint (PC/C)	13	8	6	4	10	41 (21.5%)
Unpalatable question/presupposition (UP/P)	13	2	7	3	11	36 (18.9%)
Negative expressives (NE)	7	1	7	6	9	30 (15.7%)
Message enforcers (ME)	7	2	3	2	8	22 (11.5%)
Insult (I)	5	4	4	2	6	21 (10.9%)
Condescensions (C)	5	2	6	1	6	20 (10.5%)
Threats (T)	1	-	-	-	10	11 (5.8%)
Dismissal (D)	3	-	2	-	5	10 (5.2%)
Silencers (S)	-	-	-	-	-	NONE
Total number of impoliteness strategies found						191 (100%)

Out of the five complaints selected, Complaint 5 contains the most impoliteness occurrences with a total number of 65 occurrences identified followed by Complaint 1 with a total number of 54 impolite occurrences. Complaint 3 came in third with a total of 36 impolite occurrences. Complaint 2 (19) and Complaint 4 (18) contain almost the same number of impolite occurrences.

Unlike the pilot test, pointed criticism (41) is the most commonly used impoliteness strategy in the five complaints followed by unpalatable questions and presupposition (36).

Negative expressives (30), insults (21), condescensions (20) and message reinforcer (22) are used less frequently than pointed criticism and unpalatable questions/presuppositions given the context where the forum is game-related. Dismissals (10) and threats (11) are the least found impoliteness strategies. No dismissals could be found in the comments of two (Complaint 2 and Complaint 4) out of the five complaints selected for this research. Only two dismissals are found in Complaint 3 where threat strategy is not found in Complaint 2, 3 and 4. Most threats come from Complaint 5 whereas only 1 can be found in Complaint 1. Interestingly, no silencers are found in all five complaints that have been selected.

4.2.1 Pointed Criticism

Pointed criticism is the most frequently used impoliteness strategy in the comments of these posts although Paul (2018) pointed out that forums about online gaming contain much impoliteness and violent language when the game has a competitive mode based on rankings and achievements and scales the players according to their abilities and talents.

This type of impoliteness formulae is shown to express dissatisfaction and discontentment with the game developers' efficiency in combating foul play called grief plays (Refer to Chapter 2 for more details). There is a strong sense of blame towards the game developers in terms of many management aspects in the system that was still incapable of banning spoofers effectively and providing a fair game for all gamers in the competitive mode. The feedback channel for complaints and reports about grief players was pointed out using strong word choices that denote undesirability and low value of judgement. Such can be seen in the examples below:

Example 1

The reporting system is also a **slog**.

Example 2

...waiting for the day where gyms aren't **steaming turds** anymore...

Example 3

It sucks that it also took down tracker sites though.

Example 4

...Didn't care much for gyms in the old system but this is straight up **retarded**.

Example 1 highlights the undesirability of the report system as it is likened to a task that needs a lot of effort to do and is tiring. The choice of words in the sentence expressed frustration at the failure of the game company for inefficient channel to report misbehaving gamers.

Example 2 is a more obvious pointed criticism as the gyms which give reward to gamers when they put their pokemons are compared to 'steaming turds' which has the same meaning as the rude word, 'shit', that means disgusting and unpleasant. Saglia (2000) had also pointed out that 'turd' is part of Hughes' (1988) swear word list however it is not used to refer to male or female targets only. However, the word is more impolite that what its actual meaning is as calling something or someone 'Turd' has a similar meaning as 'shit' which a vulgar slang. As the things or people are compared to excretion and is equivalent to saying, 'a piece of shit'.

In Example 3, the phrase 'it sucks' also refer to the wrong action the game company had taken in removing the service that could help detect spoofers more effectively. This was explained in the reply to the comment that states that, "Removing trackers slowed

spoofers as much as it did real players. Not sure that was their specific goal, since it changes nothing.” This phrase highlighted that removing the tracking service also affects players who played without cheating resulting in even more unfair treatment towards non-cheating players. Johnson and Lewis (2010) found that the word ‘suck’ in the phrase ‘that suck’ categorized under mild profanity is perceived as less unexpected by hearers in formal and casual settings when directed at the third party because it does not directly threaten the face like how the phrase ‘you suck’ does. As ‘that’ can also function as a pronoun, ‘it’ which is also a pronoun could easily substitute it while still refer to the third party. The interlocutor had used this strategy to avoid being censored by moderators as direct face threats are not perceived.

The use of ‘retarded’ in Example 4 is a distinctive word that is frequently used in hate speech that relates to disability (ElSherief, Nguyen, Wang, & Belding, 2018). Though ElSherief et. al. (2018) findings show that hate speech might be done in terms of five different themes which are the stand for allowance of hate speech on the internet, hate speech equals to the ability to handle different opinions, hate speech allows expressions of truth telling and getting the rights to hate speech usage. All these indicate an abuse of words to increase the hostility of expressions used on the internet by virtual communities. The use of ‘retarded’ in the current research though is not as hostile as when it is directed towards a person, is still quite hostile to show a strong sense of dissatisfaction of the gaming system.

Example 5

It's **all bark and no bite**. Hell, even bots aren't banned anymore. **They're just 'blinded' making them useless.**

Bot=a software used to automate repetitive tasks. In Pokemon Go, it is used as a cheating tool to walk the avatar without the player moving.

Some sentences contain more than one pointed criticism in the same sentence to criticize the gaming's flawed award system. 'All bark and no bite' in Example 5 is an indirect way of likening people or an organization to dogs who try to intimidate people but are too cowardly to act on their words. The following sentence which contains the word 'useless' is justified and intensified using a disability labelling word 'blinded' to devalue and disregard efforts by the whole team in the game company to ban spoofers as if it is their nature to be ignorant or refuse to know something that is obvious to the others. According to Ben-Morshe (2005), the usage of words such as 'retarded', 'lame' and 'blind' that are directed to ideas or actions encourage the stigma of associating a negative stigma to disability where these words are used to denote 'deficiency, a lack and ill-conceived' reproduce the oppression towards individuals with disabilities. However, the word 'they' had toned down the impact of impoliteness used as 'they' does not specify a person or pinpoint a person or group although the word is used to refer to two separate groups of individuals in the complete comment shown in Example 5.

Example 6

exactly, cheating to battle gyms is **weak coward shit**

Example 7

Spoofing is the source of all evil... they'**d be useless** without it.

Example 8

Did not even consider this. **It's disgusting**, honestly.

Interestingly, many of the pointed criticisms identified had been used to condemn the existence of spoofers and their cheating antics that had greatly disrupted the competitive mode of a fair advantage to reach achievement levels and the core objective in the game of getting rare pokemons with great battling powers as shown in Example 6 to 8.

Derogatory words like ‘weak’, ‘coward’ and ‘useless’ found in Example 7 and 8 infer signs of weakness and incapability. Anger was proven to be triggered by imposing a negative cost to what is valued most by individuals such as when men who value ‘physical formidability’ are viewed as weak and cowardly (Sell, 2011; Sell, Tooby, & Cosmides, 2009). The interlocutors could have assumed that all spoofers are males as they used words which reflect undesirable masculine qualities. This is a sign of intentional condemnation of the spoofing acts as they are against the righteous ideal of fair play in the gaming community.

Example 9

That is terrible logic. The cheaters have more powerful pokemon in higher numbers than legitimate players and as such will be able to take and hold more gyms than legitimate players.

Example 10

It's ridiculous, and like botting, they automate this crap too and use huge coordinate lists, candy lists, and sell like 100 accounts with maxed out gym Pokemon...

Example 11

Also from the Utica area, the amount of tyranitars some players have already **is ridiculous,** especially considering I haven't seen one nearby in the area ever.

Example 12

They aren't accomplishing anything. It's not impressive to have a roster of beasts if that is how they were obtained. **It's so pathetic.**

Tyranitar= a type of pokemon



Example 10, 11 and 13 had labelled the spoofing action as ‘ridiculous’ and made without consideration of the other gamers in terms of fair game play in the competitive mode. ‘Ridiculous’ which has the notion of being stupid and foolish appear to be used as an alternative equivalent of those terms. In Example 12, the word ‘pathetic’ is used to show that the act of spoofing does not earn any feelings of respect towards spoofers. ‘Pathetic’ refers to the describing an act or something which that show “no ability or effort’ that triggers people to have no respect or disapproval. In other words, spoofing is shown to be an act which is disgraceful and invite the certainty of others that the people who commit this action deserve no respect or mercy. This word is used when the feeling of impatience and anger aroused.

These comments call out unfairness when spoofers gain the greater benefits in the game such as capturing the most powerful in-game monsters in large quantities, achieving game levels which are impossible within a short time, occupying a battle space for gamers to reap rewards by kicking out regular gamers and selling their game accounts with all the monsters which had reached the maximum power. Pointed criticism is also used in one selected post which starts the thread to ridicule their own actions of reporting spoofers. It is a sign of frustration towards the fruitless effort made to ensure the principles of justice are upheld.

Example 13

It's getting beyond **ridiculous**. Every single day I report between 5-10 GPS spoofers and it never gets any better. Other spoofers or their alt accounts are back again the next day, taking down gyms whilst I'm sitting there in an isolated location alone trying to train up and get some prestige. **It's** a joke.

gym= a fort that Pokemon Go gamers can place only one Pokemon each to defend it for a certain period of time until gamers from other teams in the game defeat the Pokemon so that they could place theirs. Only the maximum number of 6 Pokemons could be placed in a gym at one time. A reward of 50 coins is given to gamers when their Pokemon can defend it for at least 8 hours.

4.2.2 Insults

All the variants of insult could be found in the comments under the five complaints except personalized negative vocatives. A possibly explanation is that the forum members had attempted to adhere to the forum's first rule which states that "Swearing is okay but there is a difference between saying "Fuck you" and "Fuck my Dragonite ran". Apparently, the moderators seem more inclined to delete comments which use personalized negative vocative form of insults which in other words is the act of name-calling (Jucker & Taavitsainen, 2000). Therefore, other forms of insults were used instead. There are insults which are toned down using the rhetorical devices such as 'similes' as shown in the table below:

Example 14

if you knew the reasons why I spoofed you would probably feel like a shitter.

Example 15

Ugh. I seriously feel your pain. That guy sounds like a huge asshole too.

The findings match the impoliteness occurrence reviewed by Jucker (2000) which are insult-based similes. The word 'like' followed by language which are more vulgar and punishable could be a less obvious form of impolite occurrence as it 'disguises' itself as a normal simile which is supposed to denote the meaning 'as if' which is similar but not quite the same. However, such impolite phrases implied that these forms of insult are made indirectly and do meant just what it meant as an insult (Jucker, 2000). Example 14 implied that the person directed to would indeed feel like a shitter' to the person who condemns his spoofing habit. Example 15 showed that the guy is an absolute asshole if he really did spoof. Though the prior is a personalized negative assertion, it is written in a way that attempts to evoke guilt from the forum members who condemn his spoofing

act as he discloses that he has some form of disability that prevents him from playing the game through the normal gaming way. The latter showed doubts of claiming someone as spoofer without evidence but exert certainty that the person would automatically deserve to be antagonized if he had committed spoofing.

Much of the rest of insults coded made up the two subcategories of personalized 3rd person negative reference and personalized negative assertion which is obviously referred to a third party regardless of whether the person is part of a silent majority in the forum or the forum members who are lurkers (refer to Chapter 2).

4.2.2.1 Insults: Personalized 3rd Person Negative Reference

Example 16

“This is even more problematic due to **the worthless pieces of shit** that maintain accounts on opposing teams so they can attack their own team gyms and boot out the bottom player, in order to jump into a gym they did no work in leveling.”

Example 17

I care because I'm out in the freezing cold at 1am trying to take a gym while **some idiot** is nice and warm at home with a mug of Cocoa screwing with me

Example 18

They aren't strong enough for me to consider them a rival, but they are my nemesis by virtue of them **being a cheating bugger** who has sniped me from gyms before.

Example 19

Completely pointless, made a thread about this myself, **same scumbag named after a god damn spoofing program**, instantly attacks gyms the moment you take it down.

Personalized 3rd person negative references are always directed towards spoofers who had included other forms of cheating in their already advantaged way of reaching achievements at a faster rate than the other gamers. Besides cheating, the spoofers' action of occupying a game rewarding space for his or her own by kicking out normal gamers from a gym and getting into the way of other gamers by stopping them from taking their rewards annoy and irritate the normal gamers. The spoofers' inconsiderate actions belittle the normal gamers' self-worth and evoke their hurtful feelings. The act of abusing advantage illegally and selfishly had prompted the comments made by forum members who encounter such situations to make counter-offence towards the spoofers in the form of language abuse. Such comments are made so that normal players could feel dignified as they vented their feelings and show their lack of acknowledgement of the spoofers actions and they mind a lot about how spoofers spoil their gaming experiences. 'Bugger' was used in Example 18 to refer to an annoying person who had stolen the interlocutor's rightful reward therefore reducing the joy in gameplay. 'Idiots', 'scumbag' and 'shit' in Example 16, 17 and 19 give a more impactful labelling on the spoofers. This can be viewed to be related to the level of offence taken by interlocutors when spoofers spoil their gameplay experience. The more the offence they have taken, the stronger the words that are used to label the spoofers.

The interlocutors do not care about the spoofers' presence and feelings as spoofers are the first to practise inconsiderate behaviours. Therefore, revengeful insults are written in protest of spoofers' bad behaviours. Example 16, 17, 18 and 19 had all recounts of their unpleasant experiences with spoofers before insulting the spoofers by name – calling them.

Example 20

“...**the cunts** can't sign up to a single application on the play / apple store ever again.”

Example 21

So did you tell him what kind of **a useless faghole** he was and leave some mild traces of use on his face?

Play/apple store= a mobile application used to download games

Spoofers were rudely addressed when forum members refer to them using personalized 3rd person negative reference, ‘cunt’ and ‘faghole’ in Example 20 and 21. ‘Cunts’ is ranked number one in the list of word offensiveness in the year 2000 as pointed out by Culpeper (2011). Whereas ‘faghole’ is not an actual word registered in any official dictionaries as it is a combination of ‘fag’ and ‘hole’ whereby ‘fag’ is not very offensive in British as it means ‘cigarettes’ but is an offensive and discriminative word in American English that refers to gay man. ‘hole’ itself holds many meanings which do not relate to impoliteness. However, ‘faghole’ is recognised as a rude and dirty analogy attached with a negative attitude where it denotes same-sex desire or homosexual identity (Pierce, 2001). Some personalized 3rd person negative reference occurrences as shown in the table above are found in comments that give suggestions how to ban spoofers out of the game which is seen as a fair form of punishment for spoofers not to cheat again although the suggestions might not be effective to stop spoofers.

4.2.2.2 Insults: Personalized negative assertions**Example 22**

I did complain about their behaviour, but **that person is a dick** anyway.

Example 23

Lol i gave up on these ones... i only lurk now for the giggles... **buncha nubs**

Example 24

This is the real reason why I play the game. Sure **spoofers are dicks**, but I don't let that ruin my time with the game. I just make private groups when I raid.\

Example 25

Yup I couldn't agree more **spoofers are just the incurable cancer** of pogo

Pogo=short form of Pokemon Go game

Personalized negative assertions are used to put forward the opinions that acknowledge spoofers are wrong in their gaming behavior however give the impression of giving up the protest for a total ban of spoofers as they could see that the complaints on Reddit forum could do little to pressure the gaming company to solve the problem or even for the spoofers to stop spoofing. Example 22 and 24 uses the pejoratives ‘dick’ which expresses low opinion and hostility towards people and ‘nubs’ in Example 23 which refer to people who could never play well in the game no matter how long they have played. It had however been toned down with the following comments that express that the forum members who had written these comments denied the existence of the spoofers to prevent themselves from feeling very offended.

4.2.3 Message Enforcers

Example 26

“Fix the game breaking issue - GPS spoofers at gyms (yeah the tracker... but spoofers are just as significant IMO since it impacts pretty much the only gameplay in the game – gyms”

Example 27

“Get the spoofers, and leave those tracking sites alone cos we still need to go to those sites to get them p'mons.”

IMO= internet slang/abbreviation of ‘in my opinion’

p'mons=abbreviation for pokemon

Message reinforcers can also be found frequently especially in several post threads. Most of them are aimed at pressuring the virtual reality game application developer to eliminate the spoofing problem (illegally catching monsters in the game without the need to walk to the specific location). Most of them are written in the form of imperatives and demands shown in Example 26 and 27.

Example 28

“Using a computer program to bend the laws of physics and allow you to be in two places at once is CHEATING...”

Example 29

“The experience is OBVIOUSLY changed when you're putting in an extreme effort to be out at a time when no one is... taking down a gym like no one is only to have the rewards of your effort STOLEN by someone not there...”

Example 30

“The spoofer controls EVERY SINGLE GYM in the City. Now this spoofer is also going for other upstate cities...”

Example 31

Reported it yet he's still there cheating away. Devaluing all the actual physical effort I put in. BAN THEM.

Capitalizing letters for an impolite word or phrase is also used several times shown in Example 28 - 31. Such can be categorized under message enforcers as the comments that are written are used to intensify the intended impoliteness. They do not consist of profanities or taboo words but rather to stress strong objections about spoofing that is described as a distasteful act and the difference in experience for normal players and the

spoofers. This form of message enforcers can be observed to compensate stress in intonation found in spoken conversations.

4.2.3.1 Italicised Words as Message Enforcers

In some comments such as Example 32 and 33, forum members had also italicised certain adverbials of probability to emphasize their mocking comments at the spoofers or written by those spoofers who mock at legitimate players complaining in the subforum. Such is an alternative way of compensating the lack of medium in the forum to show the rise and fall of speech intonation about where the emphasis is.

Example 32

The only difference between that person spoofing and physically being there is your satisfaction that they were *possibly* inconvenienced.

Example 33

When I say extreme I *obviously* mean extreme in the context of \$0.07c in fake money in a game ostensibly for kids where some people think even leaving the house to pay a phone game is extreme.

4.2.4 Negative Expressives

Classic curse and swear words such as ‘hell’, ‘fuck’ and ‘damn’ are frequently used. However there seem to be several unintentional strategies to reduce the intensity of curses and ill wishes.

Example 34

Hell, he even camps out spoofing in our downtown walking laps and getting some good Growlithe spawns when that's too boring for him.

Example 35

However I'll agree, the bots can go to hell

Example 36

Hell, even bots aren't banned anymore.

Growlithe= a type of pokemon



'Hell' is a taboo word that is related to religion where it is a place where only people who sin are sent to accept their punishment for wrongdoings. The word 'hell' is used many times in comments 'Hell'. 'Hell' was classified as a mild profanity by Center for Media and Public Affairs as it was recorded in broadcasting television shows in Kaye and Sapolsky's (2004) findings. Example 34 and 36 implied unpleasant experiences by the commenters when they encounter spoofers spoofing without being caught or banned from the game. However, Example 35 embeds the wish for spoofers and the gaming company to go hell as their actions bring bad experience to the gamers and should be sent to get punishment for their sins. 'Hell' in this sense is much more provocative than a mild profanity as it equates to an ill wish that brings suffering to people.

Example 37

Do what I did and say 'fuck the gyms until they function as intended.'

Example 38

Where I live I see a lot of spoofers. I just go to their gyms and say 'fuck u' by using my dragonite and tyrannitar.

Example 39

My reward? 4 mother fucking coins, this patch is a fucking kick in the teeth

Dragonite= a type of pokemon



Tyrannitar= a type of pokemon



The offensive vulgarity ‘fuck’ can be found in many comments throughout the five main thread. Some interesting patterns seem to emerge where this word is used in the form of describing a certain dialogue with open and close inverted commas in Example 37 and 38 to lessen the impact of the word in their comments as they seem to be directed towards a third party. Some comments further reduce the impact of the word into just an intensifier which sounds offensive to make angry statements about spoofing as shown in Example 39.

Example 40

...and I was just **like damn you** really feel like you can brag about using that app? I literally have worked for my pokemon and he just taps a couple buttons to move around?

Example 41

He even had the nerve to critique my Gyrados in the gym, saying "Oh damn I actually have to use a second pokemon to take this one out" **Like fuck you dude**, you're just making it harder for legit players.

Gyrados= a type of pokemon



The use of word ‘like’ in Example 40 and 41 seems to form a type of delay for reducing the impact of offensiveness of the word ‘fuck’. A delay refers to a language item which is used to put off a ‘dispreferred’ second part of a sentence. Such strategy can be seen in comments where suggestions are given on how to treat or face spoofers when the other gamers encounter them. The delay has further toned down the impact of impoliteness when interlocutors presented them in the form of recounts of specific offensive thoughts (Example 41) and using the dialogue format to lessen the effects of impoliteness and to avoid being deleted or banned from the forum.

4.2.4.1 Short Forms as Adapted Versions of Negative Expressives

Example 42

Wtf? I remembered where to get everything!!!

Example 43

FFS I don't know how anyone can no possibly understand that in their lizard brain.

Short forms of phrases that have impolite and offending meanings are used to avoid being censored by moderators as the abbreviation shortens the original spelling and act like a 'secret code' to be offensive by toning down the offence felt by the silent audience and the other forum members shown in Example 42 and 43. 'Wtf' stands for and implies the complete phrase 'What the fuck?' whereas FFS is the acronym for 'for fuck sake' which is a rude vulgar slang originated from the internet.

4.2.5 Unpalatable questions/ presuppositions

The combination of unpalatable questions and presupposition are found to be the most common impolite strategy used to attack the face of spoofers or those who appeared to side the spoofers on the post thread rather than to complain or express dissatisfaction towards spoofers and spoofing. These impolite comments are responses towards those who mentioned about their spoofing experience in the comments.

An unpalatable question was used in the response to a self-proclaimed spoofer (S) who tried to justify his/her spoofing acts in Example 44. S had seemly snubbed at the angry reaction of the other forum user who expressed irritation at his/her spoofing admittance. The phrase 'the sad part is...' indicated that S played the victim card that nobody wanted to know the reasons behind him/her spoofing. This is an obvious attempt to cause the face loss of the other forum users and make them feel embarrassed of their lack of sympathy

towards spoofers. S's whole message indicated that he tried to play the victim and shift the feeling of guilt over to other forum users for complaining about spoofers. Therefore, it increased annoyance and irritation of the other forum user and triggered response in the form of unpalatable question in retaliation shown by the forum user who did not spoof (I) in Example 44.

Example 44

S: You know I could come up with any amount of logical arguments against this, but the sad part is you don't even know the purpose behind my spoofing. If you even took the time to think about the reasons behind why someone might outside of your own victim complex of 'oh someone sniper a gym from me I quit, let's go complain online!' if you knew the reasons why I spoofed you would probably feel like a shitter.

I: Does it suck if you can't play a game that you really want to play?

S= self-proclaimed spoofer I= interlocutor (forum user who do not spoof)
sniper=defeat a gym remotely; a type of cheating attack

In Example 45, unpalatable question was used by another interlocutor (I) to pressure the self-proclaimed spoofer (S) to provide a convincing explanation about his decision to cheat in the game despite the spoofer's denial in spoiling other gamers' gaming experiences. The 'premise' which was highlighted by the interlocutor refers to the certainty of the spoofer in terms of not impacting negatively on other people's gaming experience despite not taking advantage of stealing other gamers' reward by defending the gym. I hinted that the spoofer might have impacted other gamers negatively in other aspects of the gaming experience. And unless, he could provide reasons that could convince the other gamers not to be angry at him, it is not wrong to be angry at him. Pokemons can be placed in gyms over a period of time to get coins that can be used to advance the level of gamers in Pokemon Go if their pokemons are able to defend the location from attacks from other gamers.

Example 45

S: I never touched a gym while spoofing or even not spoofing therefor* not impacting anyone else's game.

I: but why should anyone automatically start from that premise if you don't even clarify your reasons for cheating?

gym= a fort that Pokemon Go gamers can place only one Pokemon each to defend it for a certain period of time until gamers from other teams in the game defeat the Pokemon so that they could place theirs. Only the maximum number of 6 Pokemons could be placed in a gym at one time. A reward of 50 coins is given to gamers when their Pokemon can defend it for at least 8 hours.

In Example 46, S tried to deny that he/she had intentionally cheated in the game to lessen the blame and anger directed towards him/her. Presupposition was shown by I where he/she ignored S's wish not to be blamed and instead perform a direct accusation at S. I indicated that spending money to purchase in-game items and the difference in time of whether S intentionally spoof from the start does not change the fact that he/she had cheated in the game.

Example 46

S: I bought items in game to support niantic - which I still do.

Edit: and I did not initially spoof for myself in any way shape or form.

I: There you go, assuming there's a difference. Besides, you said you didn't spoof yourself initially... which means you totally did spoof.

Niantic= the name of the company which created Pokemon Go.

In Example 47, I used an unpalatable question to highlight the irony of S's statement where S admitted that spoofing is wrong but tried to compare spoofing to a legal in-game function where gamers can feed their pokemons in the gym remotely. The comment was to convince the other forum users that act of spoofing is not a serious offence. However, I had attempted to make S realised that his comment was hypocritic and laughable.

Example 47

S: your *blaming spoofers* for an in-game function. you can remotely feed your gym pokemon anytime in-game. im not saying spoofing is okay. i'm saying get you facts straight before you start a hate squad.

I: You say spoofing is not ok, but you spoof? Hilarious.

Interestingly, unpalatable questions are found to be used by both forum members who spoof and those who don't in their comments under the complaint thread about spoofers. Some unpalatable questions are used to express disdain and contempt for each other's views on spoofers and the act of spoofing such as Examples 48 and 49. Example 49 challenged and dared the spoofer to let the others report their wrong deeds openly. The comments also attempt to provoke guilt of the spoofers in two ways: (i) stating how embarrassing it is to spoof such as Example 48. (ii) challenging the spoofers to think about consequences of being reported.

Example 48

Whilst I could spoof and get perfect Mon's or get all the other regionals etc... where would my pride be in that?

Example 49

lol the complaint, god what are you spoofer scared of report?

Mon= short form for Pokemon

Some unpalatable questions were used to vent their frustration at the gaming company for putting interest before the welfare of games such as Example 50. The forum members tend to challenge the other member players who are spoofers or those who support the spoofers by provoking them with unpalatable questions and presupposition statements.

This impoliteness strategy is also used against forum members who were more considerate towards the gaming company's incompetency.

Example 50

Their #1 priority is sponsored Pokestops. More money!! **Why fix the spoofers? How many people have actually quit over it? How much money were those people pumping into the game? Will you actually quit over this?**

Example 51

What's the difference if they're playing at home or if they're sitting in a car across the street? Would you feel better if the same guy drove/walked around behind you all night?

Example 50 is a series of unpalatable questions which are directed at the person who start the thread about how spoofers give bad experience to other gamers who do not cheat by spoofing. It indicates that the person who complain do not have the rights to complain about spoofers as he or she does not benefit the gaming company in anyway of earning profit as he or she played the game for free. Such bombardment of questions tries to evoke guilt about the complaint as it gives the impression that it is unreasonable to demand the gaming company to further provide the most efficient service as the game is already free to play. The first two questions indicate that people who quit the game do pay to experience the game therefore there is not difference in them quitting or not. The last unpalatable question had even challenged the complainant to quit the game as well if he or she can't stand spoofers. Example 51 also attempt to evoke guilt by attacking the positive face of those who are suspicious of foul plays and often report or complain about

other gamers when they do not see them around at the spot to ‘battle gyms’ with the catch phrase ‘Would you feel better...’.

Example 52

F¹ : "To alleviate server stress" has been an excuse since day 3 of the game's release. I mean the population has gone down drastically since so I can't see how their servers have gotten worse over time instead of better

F² : They ARE adding new countries weekly, it seems.

I: Weren't a lot of the people from those countries playing with the manually downloaded apps anyway?

F=other forum users

I=interlocutor

In Example 52 the comment that the interlocutor (I) wrote is a combination of unpalatable question and presupposition as the justification of the slow server due to the game company’s expansion to new countries in the previous comments by other forum users (F1 and F2) were ignored and diverted to the question of whether people in the newly expanded countries has already obtained the game application and are spoofing illegally. The question has the following impolite presupposition: i) A lot of people from the countries where the game is newly introduced have been playing with illegally downloaded version of the game. ii) They do not need to wait until the legal version of the game is available to play the game. iii) A lot of gamers from these countries are cheating in the game. However, all these claims are without any basis as it is a mere provocation that generalize that everyone there are going to spoof and cheat.

Example 53

You think they memorized GPS locations that were 12+ numbers long when they always had them right in front of them to just copy and paste? When the last time you memorized a phone number considering we don't have to anymore?

Example 54

if they aren't going around town to find monsters, why would they go around town to train gyms?

Example 55

Tell me who is gonna do the actually re-stock work? Are you talking about bots here? if so, why discuss? Did I say you can win bots?

Example 56

My dumb cousin? Can you read?

Bot = a software used to automate repetitive tasks. In Pokemon Go, it is used as a cheating tool to walk the avatar without the player moving. These few examples seem to lash out at comments that are made without full understanding of spoofers and spoofing.

Unpalatable questions are thus used to fuel offence in the comments and to ridicule some comments which are not written with common sense or are viewed as being dubious as shown in Example 53 and Example 54 which were directed at another forum user. The target forum user had asked everyone on the thread to memorize the coordinates of pokestop (Refer to Appendix 2 for definitions) Example 53 consisted of remarks that are spiteful towards the individual who wrote previous comment as the phrase 'you think' which is a shorten phrase of 'do you think' to indicate nobody would thought of doing the action that was mentioned as memorizing long numbers is a tedious task as compared to copy-and-paste option and people nowadays do not memorize phone numbers as these can be stored in their mobile phones. Therefore, unpalatable questions are used to spite that the thoughts are troublesome and outdated. Example 54 shows indignation that spoofers will utilize spoofs to train and catch pokemons without the need to follow regular

gameplay rules as they are not so foolish to go around the town on foot to train their pokemon when they can falsify their location to catch pokemons. Therefore, it will pose an unfair advantage to the spoofers who could easily battle other regular gamers. The expression of annoyance is obvious.

It is also discovered that some of the comments which utilized unpalatable questions tend to elevate the level of annoyance and offence by posting a comment with many overwhelming questions which are spiteful or hurtful all at once leaving little room for retaliation or explanation by the individual who wrote the previous comment. Such impolite strategy can be seen in Example 53, 54 and 56.

Example 57

Why didn't you take his phone and transfer his treasures~?

Example 58

Why didn't you take his phone and transfer his treasures~? throw it out of the bus?

Example 57 and Example 58 have confrontational undertones and blame towards the person who encountered spoofers but did not do anything to stop or report them. Most comments under the main threads tend to describe actions they had done to attack or defeat the spoofers although the actions had not helped much to reduce spoofers. These actions seem to reflect the main view of most forum members who complain about spoofers. The impoliteness shown is a form of patronising language that attempt to dictate what an individual need to do if they encounter spoofers which is to aggravate or use physical aggression towards spoofers.

4.2.6 Presupposition

Several presupposition occurrences could be found in the Example 59 to 62 to taunt and mock the spoofers by giving them negative labels and directing character assassination at them. Example 59 hinted a negative assumption that spoofers would also commit other cheating deeds which are not related to falsifying their location (spoofing) as they have already committed the act of spoofing. 'Auto walk' is another cheating method to earn rewards in the game by using other cheating applications to falsify the record of distance that gamers have covered by walking while playing the game. The spoofers were assumed to have negative personal qualities such as in Example 60 and Sample 62 which portray them as being lack of ethics and empathy towards other non-cheating gamers. Example 61 bashed spoofers that it would be nearly impossible to have noble reasons and are smart for all the wrong reasons when they cheat as cheating is already a known wrong-doing and they are known to be sly in taking advantage to maximize their rewards with cheat strategies such as 'auto walk' to catch more pokemon and level up faster.

Example 59

GPS spoofers can auto walk (I assume, how dumb would it be not to have that).

Example 60

A large number of Pokemon Go players have very questionable ethics.

Example 61

There might be a 1% chance that a cheater has some noble reasons

Example 62

Maybe you don't put much effort into that side of things because of the particulars of your location or play style and simply can't empathise with what is plainly self-evident to others.

4.2.7 Condescension

There are fewer condescension occurrences displayed in the comments (n=19) as compared to the other impoliteness strategies. Part of the comments belittled the real identities of spoofers. They are portrayed as being young children (Example 63) who have childish thoughts, dumb, ridiculous and are still depending on their parents financially. This impoliteness strategy uses name-calling to character-assassinate the spoofer and portray him/her as immature and ignorance. The application of specific name calling labels is used for its humorous nature to portray target individuals as weak or stupid so that they appear less important. (Samoilenko, Shiraev, Keohane, & Icks, 2016). Example 64, 65 and 66 tries to belittle the spoofers by belittling their thinking and considered them unimportant.

Example 63

A trust fund kid with no job jetsetting around the world's cities to play isn't unfair.

Example 64

FFS I don't know how anyone can no possibly understand that in **their lizard brain**.

Example 65

Until then, you'll just be considered **a joke** by the real players.

Example 66

Some people go to unnecessarily great lengths just to be #1, which is...**kind of stupid when you have to cheat to do so.**

However, many comments also put down the virtual reality game and the gamers who are serious about the game when they complain about the unfairness. A number of comments give poor and negative reviews about the game and the updates that were made to combat spoofers (Example 67 – 70) Sample 68 belittles the softban initiative (a way which stops

gamers from logging into the game or catching pokemons for a short period of time between 30 minutes to 12 hours) and dismisses them as a joke. Example 69 and Sample 70 regard Niantic (the game company which creates Pokemon Go) as having no importance in people's lives as compared to uber (a taxi service mobile application that uses maps to drop or pick up people).

Example 67

It's just an **unfair, mediocre, low skill, time sink** of a game.

Example 68

Honestly, *softbans* in general **are a joke**.

Example 69

uber is a real company with real needs to stop spoofing, **niantic is a low tier game company**, seriously, get your priorities straight before comparing the 2.

Example 70

PoGo is just **a silly little phone game**, BIG difference

Uber= an application to book a taxi or a driver

4.2.8 Dismissal

The comments containing dismissals are mostly about disregarding the spoofers' actions and their welfare such as in Example 71 to 76. Example 71 dismissed the excuse of a self-proclaimed spoofer who claimed that he spoofed due to his/her physical disability that hindered his movement which is needed to play Pokemon Go properly. 'whatever' was an indication of used to mean that he does not sympathize with spoofer as the act of spoofing is considered wrong. 'Wouldn't give two hoots' used in Example 72 is quite a strong word to purposely show disrespect and is obviously dismissive. 'Wouldn't give two hoots' is an informal and rarely used old English informal expression which means couldn't be bothered or to not care about something. It creates an obvious gap between

generations as most of the young generation are not familiar with this expression therefore the chances of it being passed off as impolite is low. The pragmatic failure occurrence is intended to sound rude, to express irritation and annoyance and to shun off the younger generation who are not used to old English. Thomas (1984) study had highlighted the occurrence of pragmatic failure in cross-cultural communication. This occurrence is possibly an inter-generation pragmatic failure used to cause offence intentionally. Example 73 use 'less than two **craps**' to strengthen the dismissive expression of could not care less that it is a borderline impolite utterance which indicate something of poor quality comparable to excrement. Example 74 also attempted to dismiss or discourage attention given to spoofers by attaching negative consequences that spoofers will experience when they did not actually walk the distance to catch the pokemons, they will 'grow fat' from falsifying their locations to catch pokemons while lying on the sofa. It also served an additional function of dissing the spoofers who are lurking in the forum by threatening their negative face.

Some comments also serve as a reminder not to take the game too seriously such as Example 75 and 76. The used of 'to be blunt' and 'frankly' is direct face-attack to remind the other forum users not to be too emotional about what the spoofers had done as it is just an entertainment with no serious consequence to real life. These two words emphasize the straightforwardness and non-nonsensical statements about the importance of the game as compared to life. Example 75 and 76 use strong words that were unpalatable to emphasize their dismissive view towards the heated interaction between self-proclaimed spoofers and other forum users. It indicated a sign of annoyance and irritation by other forum users who sense that the conversation is degrading into a 'shouting scene' in the struggle to put forward their views. The ones who had written the

comments in Example 75 and 76 are most probably lurkers who express their thoughts occasionally without participating in the on-going debate about spoofing.

Example 71

disability.. whatever. it's still cheating.

Example 72

If they could somehow be banned from gyms I wouldn't give two hoots.

Example 73

I give less than two craps about losing a gym to someone who lives next to it or finds it convenient to do

Example 74

Without moving PoGo is a real poor mans MMO. Stay fit, stay active. Let spoofers grow fat

Example 75

Also, to be blunt, you really shouldn't care this much. It's a game.

Example 76

At the end of the day, you haven't been hurt physically, mentally, financially, or in any other way, except for a minor loss of enjoyment, and frankly anyone who wants to sue over that needs a trip to the ER for an overinflated ego.

ER= emergency room

4.2.9 Threats

Surprisingly, threats were rarely used in the comments under all the threads chosen. Threats are made to destroy or ruin the happiness of spoofers by describing various physical aggression that can be used against the gamers who ruin gaming experience.

Example 78 and 79 threaten to break the properties of spoofers. phones of spoofers as they could not play the game as the spoofing application is installed and worked mostly on mobile phones as compared to other electronic devices. Example 77 threatens to use digital aggression to destroy the applications such as bots and scanners used by spoofers to spoof continuously. Bots are softwares that automate a certain time-consuming task or command repeatedly which in pokemon go's game is the task to walk or travel long distances to catch rare pokemons and battle in faraway gyms whereas scanners are applications that allow spoofers to scan out of reach areas for the most sought after pokemons before spoofing to the area to catch them. These two applications assist the spoofing acts to be more efficient than just spoofing application. The abbreviation 'ddos' in Example 80 is an internet slang that refer to a type of network attack called Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) that could shut down an entire website by preventing the users from logging in (Shakarian, Gunn & Shakarian, 2016). Example 81 and 82 suggested permanent bans on the accounts of spoofers so that their gameplay experience is affected. Example 83 had shown worser threats to meddle with the spoofers' financial source in the real life.

Example 77

Kill the bots and scanners and you get the game back you want.

Example 78

Better to **ban them** then **send 73 mankeys to break their phones.**

Example 79

Better to ban them then send 73 Mankeys to **break their phones.**

Example 80

Mankey **ddos**

Example 81

Fuck that. Ban them for life. Get all associated email addresses to their POGO account and reach out to all gaming companies and **Ban the shit out of them too.**

Example 82

Fuck them up. Create a global network where the email and Mobile device ID is perma black listed and the cunts can't sign up to a single application on the play / apple store ever again.

Example 83

Contact the banks and give them the Credit card they used to buy anything in game and **blacklist the fuck out of their credit.**

Mankey= a type of pokemon



4.2.10 Silencer

Surprisingly, silencers could not be found in any of the comments under the complaint threads that are selected for this data. It is important to note that the researcher did not purposefully select data which does not contain silencer occurrence. This finding is only made after the selection of data when all the comments are analyzed.

4.2.11 New subcategories of impoliteness strategies: Written Descriptions of Offensive Prosodic Cues and Censored Vulgarities

Though these language patterns do not really fit the Conventional Impoliteness Formulae, they are novel ways of language use that project the same conventional intentions of causing offence. They could be easily identified and grouped under the impoliteness strategies discussed earlier in the chapter. Therefore, they could also be considered as novel subcategories of conventionalized impoliteness strategies.

Descriptions of rude body language to show disdain and frustration are also found in some of the textual content whereby forum users use these descriptions to create an imaginary picture of the body language being used in the minds of those who read their comments. Such might be used to escalate the impoliteness directed at the spoofers' wrongdoings while avoiding censorship. Example 84 which describes the prosodic cue of eye rolling present strong indications of disapproval, disagreement and dismissal expressions that cause offence easily (Hirst, 2015; Burgoon, Guerrero & Manusov, 2016). Hirst (2015) had pointed out that the common interpretation of eye-rolling in actual facial gestures are disagreement, disapproval and disbelief. Eye rolling is said to be one of the 'contemptuous behaviours' avoided during conflict situations by emotionally intelligent people (Burgoon, Guerrero & Manusov, 2016). Thus, the written description of certain body language cues is clearly used to cause offence on purpose. Example 84 and 85 are shown below:

Example 84

rolls eyes Well then, sure, if you bought items in game then that makes it ok. I really don't care why you did what you did. You spoofed, which means you cheated. It's not like you were starving and stole a loaf of bread to survive.

Example 85

He had at least 10 3K+ Blisseys, 10 Tyranitar, 20-30 dragonites etc. he told me he has been on 20 or more gyms for the last 6 months."... *punches in face*

Blissey= a type of pokemon



Abbreviations and censoring part of the spelling of offensive vulgarities and negative expressives were used to lower the risk of being moderated. Example 86 and 87 replace some alphabets in the spelling of taboo words to avoid being censored such as the creative

intentional misspelling in Example 86 and 87. The negative expressive ‘Wtf?’ in Example 88 is ‘What the fuck?’ and Example 89 ‘FFS’ is the short form of ‘for fuck sake’.

Example 86

Fxxked at a single gym for over 3 hours and he had to give up at the end.

Example 87

F*ck you man/mam/whatever you are.

Example 88

Wtf? I remembered where to get everything!!! (p.12)

Example 89

FFS I don't know how anyone can no possibly understand that in their lizard brain.

4.2.12 Sarcasm

Sarcasm is also found in several comments which are directed at spoofers who tried to justify their cheating actions in the gameplay as shown below (Example 90 and 94). Example 90 is directed at a spoofer who contradicts his/her own saying that he never cheated but had previous experience logging into an account used for cheating. He/She is likened to Mr Trump. Though the name apparently had no negative connotation, it relates closely to the politician in America. Mr Trump is the current President of the United States of America who is well-known for his negative quality which is the refusal to listen to critiques among the Americans and the world (Forbes, 2019). Example 94 mock and taunt the spoofer by impersonating the spoofer’s character and voicing out his thoughts about spoofing. Whereas another part of these impoliteness occurrences was indirect sarcasm as the forum members ironically compared their own poor achievements with those of the spoofers and then congratulate and praise the spoofers which in reality is the opposite of what they feel towards the spoofers (Example 91, 92 and 93).

Example 90

I never bot. Just logged into an old bot account. Nice try, Mr. Trump.

Example 91

yep, just happily chewing grass while the other guys are eating steak, good idea.

Example 92

At the end of the walk I had zero gyms, a lot fewer potions/revives, and zero coins...lovely.

Example 93

Isn't it great to reach goals with the help of cheats? What a wonderful feeling it must be. **So much effort! Such an accomplishment!**

Example 94

"I'M IN FUCKING CHINA AND LONDON BITCHES! I'm taking alllllllll the gyms!!"

Potions/revives=in-game rewards used to heal pokemons after a battle at a gym

4.5 Communication Accommodation Behaviours (CAT) in Impolite Interactions

To answer research question 2, impoliteness is found to accommodate interaction adjustments through several communication accommodation behaviours proposed in Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) is mostly associated with speech and utterances, the theory could be adapted to internet-mediated communication though the analysis might divert slightly from the analysis guideline that is proposed in Giles and Ogay (2007) study. Such adaptation can be done as CAT has been applied and generalized to studies of communication between different social groups in various media.

The impoliteness occurrences found seem to accommodate interactions through two different and contrasting communication behaviours which are accommodation

communicative behaviours and non-accommodation communicative behaviours. Some impoliteness occurrences in the responses are accommodating the nature and purpose of complaint posts whereas several responses exhibited non-accommodative communication behaviours such as maintenance, overaccommodation and divergence. Findings of accommodation behaviours are analysed based on how impoliteness in responses accommodate the flow of interaction when they are directed at a targeted comment but not the other way round. It is important to note that when the examples shown is in a dialogue form, interlocutor(s) comments (I) represent the impolite response(s) written by the forum members that was/were analysed based on CAT while Target Comment (TC) represents the comment that the responses were directed at.

4.5.1 Non Accommodation Behaviours

4.5.1.1 Counter-accommodation (Divergence)

The example below shows the communication between forum members who support spoofers or are spoofers themselves versus forum members who hate spoofers.

Example 95

Main post

Fix the game breaking issue - GPS spoofers at gyms (yeah the tracker... but spoofers are just as significant IMO since it impacts pretty much the only gameplay in the game - gyms)... It's getting beyond ridiculous. Every single day I report between 5-10 GPS spoofers and it never gets any better.

I: More money!! Why fix the spoofers? How many people have actually quit over it? How much money were those people pumping into the game? Will you actually quit over this?

Tracker=cheating app which detects pokemons' location remotely
IMO= internet abbreviation of 'in my opinion'

As predicted, several counter - accommodation communication behaviours were observed in some of the interactions under the selected post threads that contradict the topic of discussion. Divergence in opinion was shown in Sample 95 as the interlocutor (I) used unpalatable questions that hinted that gamers who quit the game had play the game for free and did not pay for any in-game services from the gaming company. Therefore, it is unreasonable to ask the game company to listen to gamers who play for free to ban spoofers. The interlocutor (I) had given opinions that contradict the main post about complaints on spoofers. He/she seemed to challenge the notion that punishing the spoofers in the game does not bring any revenue or impact for the game company. This comment disregard the feelings of other gamers who wanted a fair and just gameplay experience. Impoliteness was used here to defend the spoofers and attempt to dismiss the complaint topic.

Similarly, another non-accommodative behaviour was exhibited where forum members gave support towards the spoofers. However, it is a rare case such as in Example 96. Example 96 showed the comment that accused the other forum users of trying to cause inconvenience to the spoofers just for the satisfaction of having a fairplay.

Example 96

All you gain is some worthless sense of satisfaction that they were possibly inconvenienced.

Besides that, impoliteness was also found to counter- accommodate comments that divert from or attempt to dismiss the topic of discussion such as in Example 97. The Target Comment (TC) had pushed for the idea that it would be better to quit the game rather than complaining about it. The Interlocutor (I) had used unpalatable question to indicate that

the forum member who posted the target comment (TC) was not welcomed to comment on the topic as he/she seemed to undermine those who care about the game and encouraged the other forum members to quit the game. Indirectly, the Interlocutor's comment had accommodated the topic of discussion and seem to ensure the interactions do not diverge from the discussion topic. The interlocutor's comment served as a defensive response to an off-topic comment.

Example 97

TC: What will it take for you people to quit the game? Jesus Christ

I: why are you here?? don't you have something else better to do with your life than come here and make stupid comments?? so pathetic

4.5.1.2 Underaccommodation (Maintenance)

Example 98 and 99 had also exhibit maintenance communication behaviour to show disagreement towards how serious the forum members were in the complaint thread discussions as they seem to maintain their view that Pokemon Go is just an insignificant game where the problems faced by forum members who are gamers should not be taken seriously. Therefore, they did not show too much hatred towards the spoofers. Impoliteness was used to catch the attention of other forum members to remind them that they should not put too much emotions towards a game. Impoliteness is used as an attention grabber so that the advice given in the comments could be delivered to more readers.

Example 98

PoGo is just a silly little phone game, BIG difference

Example 99

but if they are spoofing to catch Pokemon, hatch eggs and collect items, I say who the hell cares, it's just a game...

Some other comments such as Example 100 and 101 have even encouraged those commenting on the complaint threads about spoofers to quit the game as the forum members who wrote the comment no longer play the game. Their comments seem to express annoyance at the complaints about the social game. Though they were former gamers of Pokemon Go, they still follow up with forum posts that are related to the game. This shows that they still lurked among the forum community to get the news on the updates of Pokemon Go. They might be having hopes that the game is upgraded and improved for them to play it again.

Example 100

What will it take for you people to quit the game? Jesus Christ

Example 101

Seriously, quit crying and just go catch your fucking Pokemon or quit playing.

There seem to be another form of underaccommodation in the negative stand about spoofers as there are varying levels of dissatisfaction towards the spoofers. Some impolite responses are used to express moderate level of dissatisfaction towards spoofers as they are only concerned about one or two disapproved practice of the spoofers such as in Example 102. Dismissal impoliteness strategy is more commonly used to establish this form of non-accommodation behaviour. These comments seem to distance themselves from other forum users who focused too much hatred on the spoofers which made the comments appeared more civil.

Example 102

I don't care about spoofers catching pokemon, they can catch all of them for all i care, it has absolutely no impact on me as another player. **What I care about is spoofers ruining gyms. That actually impacts other people. If a spoofer takes down a gym that I'm trying to train up, that's really really lame.** If a spoofer catches the same pokemon as me, **i don't care.**

4.5.1.3 Overaccommodation

Overaccommodation behaviours such as in Example 103 tend to consist of impoliteness strategies which overaccommodate the impolite responses towards spoofers 's comment (TC) when they were used by the interlocutor (I) to bash spoofers' comments under the complaint posts in the form of message enforcer (I¹ and I⁵) and dismissal (I², I³ and I⁴) impoliteness strategies. This interaction is intended to show no mercy or sympathy towards spoofers when they give excuses about their spoofing behaviours.

Example 103

TC: You know I could come up with any amount of logical arguments against this, but the sad part is you don't even know the purpose behind my spoofing.

I¹ : So tell us why you spoofed.

I² : Except being sniped is not a victim complex. It's a legitimate reason to dislike spoofers and especially gym snipers. It takes out the worth of actually playing the game.

I³ : I understand that maybe you don't want to tell your reasons, but you can't have both.

I⁴ : disability.. whatever. it's still cheating.

I⁵ : It sounds like you're using whatever bad situation you're in as an excuse to justify your shitty actions.

TC= Target comment

I= Interlocutor(s)/forum users

Some overaccommodation communication behaviours are present in comments that are directed towards spoofers' comments or those suspected to be spoofing consist of sarcasm and mockery, condescension and unpalatable question impoliteness strategies. Hostility of messages increased although not many taboo words were used. All these impoliteness strategies seem to be used by interlocutors (I) to distance themselves from those who admitted to spoofing practices (TC) as shown Example 104 and 105.

Example 104

TC¹ : **I never bot, but know how** - its pretty easy. just type in a location you want to go to and you are there - just that easy no gps numbers needed.

EDIT: Just logged into an old bot account, typed in central park and found a snorlax right by the central park zoo...took about 30 seconds for a 2800 CP Snorlax

I¹ : I never bot

Just logged into an old bot account

Nice try, Mr. Trump.

I² : Says "I never bot", then says "just logged into an old bot account". Then says he caught a 2800 snorlax

(not possible as max cp for level 30 is 2668). Seems legit /s

Example 105

TC² : im not saying spoofing is okay. i'm saying get you facts straight before you start a hate squad.

I³ : You say spoofing is not ok, but you spoof? Hilarious.

TC=Target comment

I=Interlocutor(s)

Snorlax = a type of pokemon



In Example 104, sarcasm I¹ was shown to point out the irony in TC¹ posted by the suspected spoofer. In Example 10, I³ is shown to taunt TC² which appeared to discourage forum members from hating the spoofers.

The more serious but rarer cases come down to threats. Over-accommodation where patronizing comments are made such as Example 106 seemed to warn the Lurkers or silent majority in the forum virtual community that the game company had started efforts to stop spoofers and spoofing practice by using the second person reference 'you' which is meant for the readers who were following the thread post. Example 107, 108, 109 and 110 showed extreme hostility where readers could feel their anger and hatred towards spoofing and spoofers.

Example 106

I used to treat spoofers a just an extra challenge but now with people running berry scripts it just makes it impossible to play. And if you do get a gym you might get a single coin out of it if you are lucky. but dont worry there is a system in place to soft ban the fuck out of you if you have the audacity to flip between pokemon and your texts.

Example 107

Better to ban them then send 73 Mankeys to break their phones.

Example 108

And another monkey to throw feces at him

Example 109

Mankey ddos

Example 110

I wanted to punch both of them in the throat.

4.5.2 Accommodation

Many of the impoliteness occurrences were used to accommodate their frustrations and dissatisfaction towards spoofers and the game company. Therefore, the impoliteness occurrences turn out to be accommodative towards the nature of the complaint posts (Example 111 and Example 112).

Example 111

The reporting system is also a slog since you can only report one player, not a pair or group of bots.

Example 112

Get the spoofers and leave those tracking sites alone cos we still need to go to those sites to get them p'mons.

Recalling of incidents and encounters with spoofers (Example 113, 114, 115 and 116) are also frequently accompanied by some form of impoliteness occurrences which indirectly accommodate the flow of communication about spoofers. The impoliteness established here is far more accommodating towards the topic of discussion than to that of the forum netiquette. Indirectly, the risk of the posts being moderated have also been lowered.

Example 113

Same thing here, my team and I noticed that the usual spoofer that takes our gyms down was inactive for about a week after that update. But as of yesterday he or she is back taking down our level 10 gyms that we work so hard to maintain. He went as far as to leave a Mr Mime at one and a CP 30 Vulpix at another. Shit's frustrating as hell.

Example 114

In fact, one of them is out of town but says they'll spoof to the gym to get mewtwo when it starts! Ridiculous

Example 115

Why am I doing Electabuzz Raids if I can't even get invited to an ex raid at that gym? BS.

Example 116

Exactly, I can not believe that they thought it was a good idea that you could take a gym and not get an immediate reward of some kind. Spent quite a while taking a gym down and put a 'mon in, another group came along and kicked me out in like 15 minutes. Got nothing. Didn't care much for gyms in the old system but this is straight up retarded.

Mr Mime = a type of pokemon



Vulpix = a type of pokemon



Mewtwo = a type of pokemon



electabuzz = a type of pokemon



Impoliteness was used to accommodate experience sharing or rather laments about their own disappointing accounts on certain bad experiences. It is interesting to see how forum members have adjusted the way they comment and arrange their words more similarly to one another. Example 117 shows the interaction between forum members about their bad experience in getting a small reward for defending gyms only for a short time as spoofers have quickly took over them and cheated by giving their pokemons 'berries' that ensure the pokemons have enough energy to defend the gyms over a long period of time. The three comments by forum members (I^1 , I^2 and I^3) used rude one-word taboo words or sarcasm embedded within their sentence to vent their anger and irritation in uniformity.

Example 117

I¹ : I put in effort, I went around for about 2 hours and took 5 gyms.

My reward? 4 mother fucking coins, this patch is a fucking kick in the teeth.

I² : 2 hours, 4 gyms, 3 came back with 1 coin each. I'd rather a kick in the teeth than this new garbage system.

I³ : Exact same here. Walked 2 blocks in 2 hours because it took so long to take gyms. At the end of the walk I had zero gyms, a lot fewer potions/revives, and zero coins...lovely.

Coins=a virtual reward that could be used to buy various items that quicken the advancement of gamer's level and to revive the pokemons used in defending or fighting for a place in the gym.

Further observation results had shown that accommodative impoliteness seemed to use more impoliteness that is directed towards bad experiences and anger towards spoofers who had directly caused them to have bad experiences.

4.5.3 Emerging Language Patterns: Impoliteness Strategies found in the types of Communication Accommodation Behaviours

The impact of offence shown through the types of impoliteness was more about releasing anger at the spur of moment in the interactions selected in this study rather than confrontational through elaborated accounts of unfortunate incidents and bad experiences. Impoliteness has also been shown to accommodate and cultivate camaraderie with other forum members which is a source of social support that exist as part of the virtual community.

Based on the data that I have discussed earlier, the type of impoliteness strategies that are used more frequently to accommodate different interaction accommodation behaviours have been tabulated as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Impoliteness strategies frequently used in types of Communication Accommodation conditions

Types of Communication Accommodation conditions	Types of impoliteness strategies frequently used
Counter-accommodation (Divergence)	Unpalatable question
Underaccommodation (Maintenance)	Dismissal
Overaccommodation	Threats, message enforcer, insults, sarcasm
Accommodation	Pointed criticism, negative expressive

Unpalatable questions were found to be used frequently to diverge from the topic of discussion in the forum. This counter-accommodation behavior appeared to discourage forum members from complaining by making them look stupid. Gamers who do not really mind the cheating problem seem to exhibit underaccommodation behaviours through dismissal impoliteness strategy as they seem to hold the view that gaming makes up just a small part of their lives. Overaccommodation behaviours seem to be the ones which have the highest potential in causing flaming and hostile interactions that are given the most attention in various impoliteness studies on CMC. Lastly, accommodation behaviours that seemed impolite may be the crucial ones that keep the interactions going as a force of constructive criticism that could help improve the gaming development.

4.6 Summary

In general, most of the impoliteness occurrences in the data are about judgments that spoofing is an unacceptable behaviour in the community of social gaming (Culpeper, Schauer, Marti & Nevala, 2014).

The findings in the current research show that impoliteness occurrences that were found in online forums contains both the classic form of impoliteness formulae as well as adapted versions of impoliteness strategies to compromise the absence of impoliteness

cues found through speech and face-to-face encounters. The impoliteness occurrences found in comments that are debating and discussing about gaming in the current research are slightly less aggressive than those in the findings of Viljakainen (2016) as direct insults are used lesser than other forms of impoliteness strategies. Such may be due to the forum members' adherence towards the first forum rule where direct insults which sound more confrontational are considered as 'being rude' whereas the other impolite strategies used are considered as 'trying to actually being polite' because swearing is allowed as shown below:

1) Please be polite here, even when you are upset or disagreeing* with someone

*Note that we do not expect you to just avoid being rude, but we expect you to try and actually be polite. Swearing is okay but there is a difference saying "Fuck you" and "Fuck my Dragonite ran"

Though it seems that the type of swearing that seems to be allowed are expletives, the potentials of offensiveness they exert depends on the context. Expletives are known as interjections used solely for swearing (Gehweiler, 2010). However, these expletives seem to be viewed as normal interjections when they are not part of an insult which is directed at individuals which would bring about the arise of flaming that might provoke heightened hostility in online interaction which will cause serious conflict among the forum members. Flaming activities tend to inflict harm in terms of face attack towards an individual or organization. This research finding is thus consistent with Johnson and Lewis (2010) findings on profanities in which swearing that are not targeted at a specific person impact the hearers less due to the absence of direct face-attacks. Therefore, the risk of causing or taking offence is lowered. In contrast, the intentions of causing offence are made obvious with reinforcements from written descriptions of rude body language and self-censored

or self- altered vulgarities written by forum members. They send the spoofers a clear message about being offended by minimizing the tendency of readers to view their comments as banter or jokes. The ability to limit interpretations of the message that spoofing is not tolerated even without the use of offensive language indicate the potential creativity in language use to outsmart censorship. As Yus (2011) had stated ‘There are no unintentional nonverbal behaviours in text-based online chats’. Therefore, such written language had been categorized as one of the strategies of intentional transference of nonverbal information in cyberpragmatics which is known as stage direction. This strategy is used intentionally to create a contextualized environment that reflects a more realistic and familiar way of interacting which is similar to the actual face-to-face communication and can act as ‘complete performative utterances’ (Yus, 2011; Herring, 2019). This finding has also reflected the limitations of online censorship as it is not updated with E-grammar or language evolution online which makes it incapable of censoring offensive body language descriptions and altered forms of vulgarities (Herring, 2019). Therefore, it is a loophole that forum members have taken advantage of in order to convey their frustration and anger and evading the censorship detention. This pattern of language alteration indicated that online users have realized that conventionally viewed impoliteness in censorship features could not contain the online offences that they want to make. They will continue to make constant alterations in presenting the conventional impoliteness strategies to oppose different levels of online interaction censorship.

The forum members of r/pokemongo subforum were accommodative towards each other’s use of impoliteness to vent their negative emotions therefore built a rather good social support for each other as they have mutual purpose in the use of impoliteness. Overaccommodation behaviours were shown by forum members in their use of impoliteness towards spoofers. It can be shown that most of the impolite occurrences had

been directed at spoofers who commented on the thread were more aggressive than just comments complaining about spoofing. The impolite occurrences were used to express disdain, taunting and accusations. Most of them had tried to show that they looked down on the spoofers and some had even tried to use mildly impolite words and sarcasm to make the spoofers realise or admit that their actions are indeed wrong.

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CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Impoliteness occurrences found in social gaming (MMOG) forums

Pointed criticism is most commonly found impoliteness strategies in r/pokemongo forum discussion that is labelled as complaints which fulfilled the intended purpose of the discussion thread although the topic of discussion is a rather heated topic among avid gamers of pokemongo. The pointed criticism found contains less vulgarities and taboo words, instead are filled with strong words that blame and show dissatisfactions towards those involved in spoiling the gameplay experience.

The absence of silencers in the data could be because there are no elements of wanting to exert dominance of conversation over one another. Instead, are focused on expressing frustrations and describing recounts of unpleasant encounters with spoofers who spoil the game for regular gaming experience. Therefore, impoliteness strategies found in the discussion about spoofing function more as a dissatisfaction venting and as a motion to reach out to the virtual community in Pokemon Go to promote justice ideals where spoofers and the acts of spoofing can be reduced with efforts by other gamers in the virtual community. Consistent with the findings of Smith, Phillips, & King, (2010), responding to comments that either vent frustrations and anger; or to uphold social justice in the research data is all about protecting and defending dignity of gamers who play the game without cheating collectively.

The subcategories of impoliteness strategies found in during the analysis are also worth mentioning as they are novel expressions of impoliteness that match the conventions of impoliteness strategies proposed by Culpeper (2011). Therefore, they should be included

in Culpeper's Impoliteness Formulae so that could be applicable to a wider range of impoliteness occurrences found in virtual discussions.

Heated discussions in this research is not to be confused with flaming which is a more severe form of impoliteness. Flaming is more synonymous related to forms of harassment and hate speech (O' Sullivan & Flanagin, 2003) The impoliteness is shown to be embedded in a series of reasonable arguments that make it appeared to be justified.

In conclusion, forum users who are gamers may be offended by impolite comments even though they know that Pokemon Go is just a game which do not impact much on practical needs such as career advancement or income except entertainment. As Culpeper and Hardaker (2017) had put it that impoliteness can hardly be neutralised by context as it is difficult for individuals to be aware of the context where impoliteness occurs as they will still be offended despite cues of playfulness.

5.2 Communication Accommodation Behaviours in Online Gaming Forum Interactions

In terms of heated discussions about gaming, perception of social distance felt by the forum members plays the main role in how impoliteness is used to accommodate interactions. Adjustments made to communication behaviours were shown to influence the use of different impoliteness strategies. Forum members who have similar sentiments about an opinion in a comment used similar impoliteness strategies to accommodate interaction that respond the comment. The similarity in sentiments is also shown to be used against comments which are non-accommodative to their sentiments in this case, their perceptions of spoofers and spoofing. Several divergence communication behaviours found had used mostly unpalatable questions to query the purpose of the complaint posts threads. However, the responses directed towards the divergent

communication behaviour were attempts to redirect the interaction to accommodate the topic of discussion. The findings thus supported the findings by LeBlanc (2010) where a flame war had occurred between forum members with contrasting opinions to move discussions back to the main topic. Therefore, a sense of solidarity is built in terms of unison in opinions which could possibly be studied in terms of varying opinions in the in-group interactions.

The forum members shown non-accommodative behaviours towards the forum's etiquette of not using impoliteness but instead accommodative towards the topic that has the tendency to spark impoliteness and communication strategies that could maximize the purpose of complaints. Parallell to Bunz and Campbell's (2004) study, impoliteness is just as capable as politeness in providing effective interpersonal communication in the computer-mediated context in terms of expressions of a common goal of having a fair gameplay. It reflects the closeness and commitment among forum members in a virtual community to strive for a better social gaming experience.

It is clearly a case of mismatch in communicative expectations of forum moderators and the forum users. The rules are restrictive to the 'communication potentials' of a complaint where the purpose is to display expressions of displeasure and annoyance or to tell that something is wrong or unsatisfactory with the hope that actions or measures can be done to solve or improve. The drive to protect the dignity of regular players overrides the requirement to abide the rules that discourage impoliteness. The topic of the subforum had appeared to motivate forum members who are also gamers to express strong sense of frustrations and anger towards the spoofers and the game company's updates in the game that are unsuccessful in solving the problem and worsen the normal players' gaming experience. Therefore, the netiquette in the forum only serves as a reminder not to escalate

impoliteness and offence members of the forum community. Similar to de Oliveira's (2003) study, the findings of this research also reflect the roles played by members of a virtual community influence boundary-setting to negotiate norms of interaction. However, slightly unlike the findings, only the overaccommodating communication behaviours which consist of mostly threats and insults are at risk of getting deleted in this study.

The possibly reason behind the popular use of borderline impoliteness and mild profanities to accommodate online discussions in the virtual communities has been clarified in this research as internet censorship is much prominent these days. According to Warf (2011), a quarter of the world's online users are put under very harsh forms of censorship and some other self-censorship have even done more to filter out adverse behaviours and online hostility. The Lurkers as identified by Rice (2006) who consist of active readers of the forum posts consisting of the gamers seem to play a more effective role of moderating the impoliteness used to accommodate the discussions in the forum threads instead of the moderators of the forum who would just delete the comments which are impolite.

There were not too many trolls in this sub forum as most of the discussion was related to the topic about spoofers could possibly due to the maturity of forum community. Such can be due to the text system in reddit where the more impolite comments were not very visible to the forum users who are mostly lurkers when they got downvoted. Reddit forum contains a system where undesirable comments get downvoted to reduce escalation of impoliteness in the forum community.

5.3 Implications of Study

Impoliteness strategies used by online social gamers is slightly different from traditional gamers in their virtual communities as not much hostility is identified in the data though there are occasional ones that could have been overlooked by moderators and other lurkers in the forum community. The results add to the literature in terms of how impoliteness strategies used changes with the evolution of online gaming as borderline impoliteness is used instead of crude and face-aggravating interactions that caused flaming in many other MMO forums such as 4chan. This research study thus add literature on impoliteness in social game virtual communities where interactions negotiated by the community of gamers consist of a wider range of age groups that close the generation gap in discussions. The findings also deepen understanding of language patterns in virtual space interactions that can reflect a varying concept of accommodative and non-accommodative behaviors among different gaming communities and a new form of social interaction in the virtual community which appeared to be more creative in expressing impoliteness. Besides that, this research has offered impoliteness constructs which could a better understanding of non-accommodation and potentially problematic communication which is put forward by Giles and Gasiorek (2013) in the online social context.

5.4 Recommendations for future studies

As MMO games in the form of social games are gaining more popularity, further research might be useful to study the evolving patterns of in the use of impoliteness in virtual communities made up of gamers. This research had shown that some adaptations have been made to the ways where impoliteness is expressed online and a more comprehensive identification of those patterns could be done to shade light on how censorships can function more effectively in reducing hostility in online conversations that could help in

areas such as cyberbullying. Researchers can also look further into other social networks such as Facebook Group as this platform offers more communicating features to build larger and more active virtual communities.

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