

**THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF IMPOLITENESS IN
MALAYSIAN RADIO PRANK CALLS**

GOH VERN ANN

**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
LINGUISTICS**

**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR**

2014

UNIVERSITI MALAYA

ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION

Name of Candidate: Goh Vern Ann

(I.C/Passport No: 890117-07-5338)

Registration /Matric No: TGC110007

Name of Degree: Master of Linguistics

Title of Project Paper/Research Report/Dissertation/Thesis (“this Work”):
The Discursive Construction of Impoliteness in Malaysian Radio Prank Calls.

Field of Study: Pragmatics

I do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

- (1) I am the sole author/writer of this Work;
- (2) This Work is original;
- (3) Any use of any work in which copyright exists was done by way of fair dealing and for permitted purposes and any excerpt or extract from, or reference to or reproduction of any copyright work has been disclosed expressly and sufficiently and the title of the Work and its authorship have been acknowledged in this Work;
- (4) I do not have any actual knowledge nor do I ought reasonably to know that the making of this work constitutes an infringement of any copyright work;
- (5) I hereby assign all and every rights in the copyright to this Work to the University of Malaya (“UM”), who henceforth shall be owner of the copyright in this Work and that any reproduction or use in any form or by any means whatsoever is prohibited without the written consent of UM having been first had and obtained.
- (6) I am fully aware that if in the course of making this Work I have infringed any copyright whether intentionally or otherwise, I may be subject to legal action or any other action as may be determined by UM.

Candidature’s Signature

Date:

Subscribed and solemnly declared before,

Witness’s Signature

Name: Dr. Thilagavathi Shanmuganathan

Date:

ABSTRACT

This study is titled *The discursive construction of impoliteness in Malaysian radio prank calls*. It investigates the process in which impoliteness develops in Hitz.fm's 'Gotcha' calls. Three stages are taken into account. They include how impoliteness is initiated, how impoliteness develops and how impoliteness comes to an end. This study also examines the impoliteness strategies that are employed by the participants to communicate impoliteness in the prank calls. Bousfield's (2007) model of beginnings, middles and ends and Culpeper's (1996, 2005) impoliteness model are adapted as the theoretical framework of the research. A qualitative approach is employed to analyse 25 'Gotcha' calls. They are downloaded from Hitz.fm's website. These are prank calls where the deejays ring up an unsuspecting victim to convey news that is essentially untrue. The findings demonstrate that impoliteness does unfold according to a sequential process in the radio prank calls. Besides, impoliteness strategies like negative impoliteness and positive impoliteness are frequently used by the participants. Linguistic devices such as repetition, mimicry and challenges are also incorporated to express face-attacks. In addition, the study shows that the receivers tend to be more impolite than the deejays.

Keywords: Radio prank calls, 'Gotcha' calls, progression of impoliteness, impoliteness strategies

ABSTRAK

Disertasi ini bertajuk *Proses mewujudkan ketidaksopanan dalam panggilan palsu radio di Malaysia*. Kajian ini menyelidik cara ketidaksopanan diwujudkan dalam panggilan ‘Gotcha’ yang dilaksanakan oleh Hitz.fm. Terdapat tiga peringkat yang terlibat dalam analisis ini – bagaimana ketidaksopanan dimulakan, bagaimana ketidaksopanan dibinakan dan bagaimana ketidaksopanan diakhirkan. Kajian ini juga menganalisis strategi-strategi ketidaksopanan yang digunakan oleh para peserta untuk menunjukkan ketidaksopanan dalam panggilan palsu radio. Model Bousfield (2007) yang memeriksa permulaan, pertengahan dan pengakhiran ketidaksopanan dan model ketidaksopanan Culpeper (1996, 2005) digunakan sebagai kerangka teoretikal disertasi ini. Kaedah qualitative digunakan untuk menganalisis sebanyak 25 panggilan ‘Gotcha’. Panggilan-panggilan tersebut dimuatturunkan dari laman web Hitz.fm. Panggilan-panggilan palsu ini berlaku apabila DJ menelefon sasaran yang terlibat dan menyampaikan berita palsu. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa ketidaksopanan memang berlaku mengikut satu urutan dalam panggilan palsu radio. Selain itu, strategi-strategi ketidaksopanan seperti *negative impoliteness* dan *positive impoliteness* banyak digunakan. Kaedah –kaedah seperti pengulangan kata, peniruan kata dan pencabaran juga digunakan untuk menyatakan ketidaksopanan. Di samping itu, kajian ini turut menunjukkan bahawa sasaran-sasaran panggilan palsu ada kecenderungan untuk menjadi lebih kurang sopan daripada DJ.

Kata kunci: Panggilan palsu radio, panggilan ‘Gotcha’, perkembangan ketidaksopanan, strategi-strategi ketidaksopanan

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Thilagavathi, who took me in as her supervisee and guided me patiently throughout this research. I would like to thank her for all the help and encouragement she provided me with.

I would also like to thank my mother, Ching Kim Chee, for her unlimited love, support and understanding which helped immensely during this journey. Her faith in me was what ensured the success of this research. My heartfelt thanks also go to my dearest twin sister, Goh Vern Jan and cousin sister, Tan Renjie for their kind words and reassurances.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
<i>ABSTRAK</i>	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF TABLES	x
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Statement of the Problem	2
1.2 Objectives of the Study	5
1.3 Research Questions	6
1.4 Significance of the Study	8
1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study	10
1.6 Summary	11
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.0 Introduction	13
2.1 The Notion of Impoliteness	13
2.2 The Entertainment Value of Impoliteness	17
2.3 Review of Impoliteness Theories	22
2.4 Previous Studies on Impoliteness in Radio Discourse	35
2.5 Radio Prank Calls	44

2.5.1 General Overview of Radio Prank Calls	44
2.5.2 Downside of Radio Prank Calls	46
2.5.3 Face, Role of Participants and Impoliteness in Radio Prank Calls	48
2.6 Summary	52

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction	54
3.1 Instrument	54
3.2 Theoretical Framework	55
3.2.1 Bousfield's (2007) Model of Beginnings, Middles and Ends	56
3.2.1.1 Beginnings	58
3.2.1.2 Middles	62
3.2.1.3 Ends	65
3.2.2 Culpeper's (1996, 2005) Impoliteness Model	67
3.3 Method	71
3.4 Ethical Issues	73
3.5 Data Collection and Procedure	73
3.6 Data Analysis	73
3.7 Pilot Study	75
3.7.1 Layperson Analysis	80
3.8 Summary	82

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction	83
------------------	----

4.1 Stages which Constitute the Progression of Impoliteness in the ‘Gotcha’ Calls	83
4.1.1 The Initiation of Impoliteness	84
4.1.1.1 Event – Behaviour	85
4.1.1.2 Potential Damage	86
4.1.1.3 Language	92
4.1.1.4 Intentionality	94
4.1.1.5 Status	96
4.1.2 The Progression of Impoliteness	98
4.1.2.1 Accepting the Opponent’s Position	99
4.1.2.2 Usage of Defensive Strategies	100
4.1.2.3 Usage of Offensive Strategies	105
4.1.2.4 Usage of Defensive and Offensive Strategies	106
4.1.3 Impoliteness Ending	107
4.1.3.1 Stand-Off	108
4.1.3.2 Submission to the Opponent	110
4.1.3.3 Compromise	111
4.1.3.4 Withdrawal	112
4.1.4 Summary of RQ1’s Findings	113
4.2 Impoliteness Strategies in the ‘Gotcha’ Calls	114
4.2.1 Impoliteness Strategies Used to Elicit Impoliteness	114
4.2.1.1 Negative Impoliteness	115
4.2.1.2 Positive Impoliteness	117
4.2.1.3 Bald on Record Impoliteness	119
4.2.1.4 Combination of Impoliteness Strategies	120
4.2.1.4.1 Negative Impoliteness + Positive	121

Impoliteness	
4.2.1.4.2 Negative Impoliteness + Bald on Record Impoliteness	122
4.2.1.4.3 Bald on Record Impoliteness + Positive Impoliteness + Sarcasm	123
4.2.2 Impoliteness Strategies Used to Convey Impoliteness	125
4.2.2.1 Negative Impoliteness	127
4.2.2.2 Positive Impoliteness	129
4.2.2.3 Bald on Record Impoliteness	130
4.2.2.4 Combination of Impoliteness Strategies	131
4.2.2.4.1 Negative Impoliteness + Positive Impoliteness	132
4.2.2.4.2 Negative Impoliteness + Bald on Record Impoliteness	133
4.2.2.4.3 Negative Impoliteness + Bald on Record Impoliteness + Positive Impoliteness	135
4.2.2.4.4 Sarcasm + Positive Impoliteness + Negative Impoliteness	136
4.2.3 New Output Strategy for Negative Impoliteness	138
4.2.4 Summary of RQ2's Findings	140

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction	142
5.1 Conclusions	142

5.2 Implications	145
5.3 Recommendations	146
5.4 Summary	148
References	150
Appendices	
Appendix A	160
Appendix B	161
Appendix C	165

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1: Summary of Response Options (Extended)	57
Figure 3.2: Culpeper et al.'s (2003) Summary of Response Options	63
Figure 4.1: Types of Impoliteness Endings in the 'Gotcha' Calls	108
Figure 4.2: Summary of the Progression of Impoliteness in the 'Gotcha' Calls	113

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: List of Defensive Strategies	64
Table 3.2: The Stages in Data Collection	73
Table 3.3: Results of the Layperson Test	81
Table 4.1: Types of Impoliteness Elements in the 'Gotcha' Calls	84

Table 4.2: Types of ‘Potential Damages’ Faced by the Receivers	87
Table 4.3: Types of Response Options in the ‘Gotcha’ Calls	98
Table 4.4: Types of Defensive Strategies in the ‘Gotcha’ Calls	100
Table 4.5: Types of Impoliteness Strategies to Provoke Impoliteness	115
Table 4.6: Combinations of Impoliteness Strategies to Elicit Impoliteness	120
Table 4.7: Types of Impoliteness Strategies to Express Impoliteness	125
Table 4.8: A Comparison of Impoliteness Strategies between the Deejays and Receivers	126
Table 4.9: Combinations of Impoliteness Strategies to Convey Impoliteness	131
Table 4.10: A Comparison of Combinations of Impoliteness Strategies	132