

IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES USED IN A POLITICIAN'S FACEBOOK

SHAMILAH ABDUL HALIM

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND  
LANGUAGE

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS  
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA  
KUALA LUMPUR

2015

## **ABSTRACT**

The use of computer-mediated communication particularly Facebook has become immense in our community these days. The increased online communication has also contributed to the growth of impolite language used by the participants. Thus, this study intends to firstly, investigate the types of impoliteness strategies used by facebookers in a politician's Facebook, and secondly, to determine the factors that may contribute to impoliteness among the facebookers in computer-mediated communication (CMC), namely Facebook. 151 comments in a politician's Facebook were analysed using Culpeper's Impoliteness Strategies (2011) in order to identify the different strategies used by the participants. Consequently, findings showed that the most common impoliteness strategy used by Facebookers in the politician's Facebook was insult strategy. Besides the strategies, the possible factors of impoliteness occurrences such as anonymity, lack of non-verbal cues and emotion were also determined. Due to the CMC context, these three factors contributed much to the occurrences of impoliteness in Facebook comments.

**Keywords:** Facebook, impoliteness, computer-mediated communication

## ***ABSTRAK***

Penggunaan komunikasi menggunakan komputer ataupun ‘computer-mediated communication (CMC)’ terutama Facebook semakin ketara di kalangan masyarakat masa kini. Peningkatan komunikasi dalam talian telah turut menyumbang kepada perkembangan penggunaan bahasa tidak sopan oleh pengguna Facebook. Disebabkan itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk, pertama; menyelidik jenis strategi ketidaksopanan oleh pengguna Facebook di akaun Facebook seorang ahli politik terkenal Malaysia. Kedua, untuk melihat faktor yang mungkin menyumbang kepada ketidaksopanan di kalangan pengguna Facebook. 151 komen di akaun Facebook seorang ahli politik, telah dianalisa menggunakan teori Formula Ketidaksopanan Culpeper (2011) untuk mengenalpasti strategi berlainan yang digunakan oleh pengguna Facebook. Hasilnya, kajian menunjukkan strategi yang paling banyak digunakan oleh pengguna Facebook di laman Facebook ahli politik tersebut adalah ‘insult’. Selain dari itu, kajian ini juga turut mengenalpasti faktor-faktor yang menyumbang kepada ketidaksopanan seperti ketiadaan identity (*anonymity*), kekurangan petunjuk bukan verbal (*non-verbal cues*) dan emosi. Disebabkan oleh konteks komunikasi melalui komputer, tiga faktor ini banyak menyumbang kepada terjadinya ketidaksopanan di dalam komen di Facebook.

Kata kunci: Facebook, ketidaksopanan, komunikasi melalui komputer

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude and deep regards to my supervisor, Dr. Baljit Kaur for her exemplary guidance, monitoring and constant encouragement throughout the course of this dissertation. The blessing, help and guidance given by her time to time really helped me in completing this task through various stages.

Last but not least, I thank Almighty, my parents, family and friends for their constant encouragement. Without them, it is impossible for me to complete the dissertation.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ABSTRAK.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.3 Purpose of the Study.....	3
1.4 Research Questions.....	4
1.5 Significance of the Study.....	4
1.6 Limitations of the Study.....	4
1.7 Summary.....	5
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
2.1 Introduction.....	6
2.2 Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory.....	6
2.3 Definitions of Impoliteness.....	7
2.4 Other Notions of Impoliteness.....	8
2.5 Definition of Impoliteness by Culpeper (2011).....	12
2.6 Culpeper's Impoliteness Strategies.....	13
2.6.1 Face.....	13
2.6.2 Experiential Norms.....	14
2.6.3 Social Norms and Rights.....	14
2.6.4 Morality.....	15
2.6.5 Forms of Impoliteness.....	17
2.7 Computer-mediated Communication (CMC).....	20
2.7.1 What is Computer-mediated Communication?.....	20
2.7.2 Political Communication in CMC.....	20
2.7.3 Past Studies on Impoliteness in CMC.....	21
2.7.4 Flaming in CMC.....	24
2.8 Facebook.....	29
2.8.1 Facebook and Political Communication.....	31
2.9 Summary.....	33
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	34
3.1 Introduction.....	34
3.2 Participants.....	39
3.3 Instruments.....	40
3.4 Procedures.....	41
3.5 Methodological Advantages and Disadvantages of the Dataset.....	43
3.6 Summary.....	44
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....	45
4.1 Introduction.....	45
4.2 Impoliteness Strategies Used by Facebookers.....	47
4.3 Factors That Trigger Impoliteness in the Facebook Comments.....	77
4.4 Summary.....	84
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION.....	85
5.1 Introduction.....	85

5.2	Findings.....	85
5.3	Limitations of the Study.....	86
5.4	Implication and Recommendation for Future Studies.....	87
	REFERENCES.....	88
	APPENDICES.....	91
	Appendix A – Status 1.....	91
	Appendix B – Status 2.....	92
	Appendix C – Status 3.....	93
	Appendix D – Status 4.....	94
	Appendix E – Status 5.....	95
	Appendix F - Social network ranking in Malaysia.....	96
	Appendix G – Sample of email correspondence with Culpeper.....	97

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 3.4: Data Analysis Procedure.....	43
Figure 4.1: Impoliteness Strategies Used by the Facebookers.....	45

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Impoliteness Strategies by Culpeper (2011).....	35
Table 3.2: Impoliteness Strategies and the Key Elements.....	38
Table 4.1: Impoliteness Strategy 1: Insults.....	48



## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

The famous Politeness Theory by Brown and Levinson (1987) has encouraged many other studies on politeness. Thus, politeness has had a long history and needs no introduction among linguists. “Paradoxically, the opposite can be said for the study of impoliteness. Only recently, there has been a growing interest to study the phenomenon of impoliteness more extensively” (Locher&Bousfield, 2008, p.2). Impoliteness according to Culpeper (2011) is:

A negative attitude towards specific behaviour occurring in a specific contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires, and/or beliefs about social organisation, including, in particular, how one person’s or a group’s identities are mediated by others in interaction. Situated behaviours are viewed negatively- considered ‘impolite’- when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they ought to be. Such behaviours always have or are presumed to have emotional consequences for at least one participant, that is, they cause or are presumed to cause offence. Various factors can aggravate how offensive an impolite behaviour is taken to be, including for example whether one understands a behaviour to be strongly intentional or not. (p.23)

Impoliteness has grabbed few researchers’ attention in the past. However, most of previous studies were made on face-to-face interactions or conversations. These days, more and more people interact in the virtual world where they can see each other through computer screens or only through written text communication. This has encouraged more studies to shift their focus to computer mediated communication (CMC). As stated by Herring (2007):

Communication, most basically stands for the exchange of information (be it ideational or relational), ‘mediation’ describes the fact that there is a technological means that is

employed to communicate, and finally, 'computer' specifies that the means of mediation is related to technology, such as computers/internet, mobile phones, video conferencing, etc. In addition, it is useful to distinguish between synchronous means (e.g. chats) and asynchronous means (e.g. blogs, fora) of computer-mediated communication and to investigate both the situation and the technical factors that influence language practices. (cf. Herring 2007a)

The existence of virtual communication has brought in social network – where people communicate with each other through the Internet. This way of communication has become a phenomenon recently, and one of the most popular social networks is Facebook. With 1.1 billion users worldwide, the influence of Facebook as a means of communication is undeniable. Interestingly, it has not been used only for communication between people, but also by politicians to reach their supporters and also as a medium for political campaign. This has made Facebook a powerful tool of political communication. In fact, the famous 'Arab Spring' (democratic uprisings that arose independently and spread across the Arab world in 2011) started from Facebook. Inarguably, Facebook and also other CMC setting network contribute a lot to political communication. As Facebook becomes a medium of political communication, this has created a community of practice in Facebook where people who have interest in politics and current issues gather to discuss political issues. Discussions sometimes lead to disagreements and become heated arguments, and this is when impoliteness comes in.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

Language is undeniably part of culture. The traditional, stereotypical view is that people in East Asian cultures are indirect, deferential and extremely polite in the way they communicate (Kadar & Mills, 2011). However, taking examples from a Facebook community in Malaysian context, it is noticeable that impoliteness has become common among the locals. There have been several empirical studies on politeness and few on impoliteness as the latter is considered marginal in daily life. In fact, Locher (2005) states that most of the studies are based on Brown and Levinson (1987) while relatively few studies explore the dynamics of the newer models in empirical research. Fortunately, there were some studies lately that discussed (Im)politeness theories in CMC context. Their findings had contributed much in helping us to interpret impoliteness in CMC. However, majority of them had been carried out using qualitative methods. Thus, it can be said that impoliteness studies using quantitative methods in CMC are still inadequate. (Lorenzo-Dus, Blitvich & Bou-Franch, 2011). In my knowledge, there has not been enough quantitative research on impoliteness in Facebook, particularly in the Malaysian context. Thus, this is my attempt to fill a twofold research gap namely, impoliteness and Malaysian CMC.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of my study is to look at impoliteness in a politician's facebook and the possible causes that influence people to be impolite in a Facebook context. Therefore, there are two objectives of my study, first is to investigate the types of impoliteness strategies used by facebookers in a politician's Facebook, and second is to determine the factors that may contribute to impoliteness among the facebookers in Computer-mediated communication (CMC) namely Facebook.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

- 1) What types of impoliteness strategies are used by the facebookers in a politician's Facebook?
- 2) What are the possible factors that contribute to impoliteness in Facebook comments?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study aims to fill the research gap and add to past literature as there have been relatively few studies that examine impoliteness in a computer-mediated community (CMC) especially in Facebook. My view is similar to Graham (2006), Locher (2004), and Watts (2003) where our understanding on this issue is still not sufficient and more clarifications are needed. Graham (2006) has stated that there have not been many studies on impoliteness particularly in the context of computer-mediated communication (CMC). Therefore, it is hoped that my research will contribute to the studies of impoliteness especially in computer-mediated communication (CMC).

### **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

The data for the study is collected only from one particular account in Facebook and impoliteness strategies used by the facebookers is analyzed based on Culpeper's impoliteness formulae (2011). This study is done in a Malaysian context, thus it might be different from studies done in other countries as culture and norms could also play a key role in the study. Next, only comments in English Language are considered as data in this study, so the amount of data might be limited as most Malaysians use the national language to write their comments. Last but not least, there is no interview done as it is hard to get co-operation and authentic answers from the commenters, since most of them prefer to be anonymous.

## **1.7 Summary**

In this chapter, the primary aim of the study is mentioned with some background of the topic that will be covered in the next chapter. In the next chapter, the framework that I choose for my study will be delivered besides other past literature.

## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, a few theories of politeness and impoliteness are presented. This is followed by computer-mediated communication (CMC) and how it relates to political communication and impoliteness in CMC.

## **2.2 Brown and Levinson's Theory of Politeness**

Many researchers have attempted to re-investigate Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory and refine the framework to suit a much broader spectrum of language behaviour (Watts, 2003; Spencer-Oatey, 2005).

Brown & Levinson's theory of politeness has been the most influential framework of politeness so far, and it provides an important basis for the discussion on the notions of impoliteness in this paper. Brown and Levinson's theory represents the face-saving view, as it builds on Goffman's (1967) notion of face which concludes with the notions of being embarrassed or humiliated or losing face. The face is considered as something emotionally invested, and can be maintained, enhanced or even lost. Based on Brown & Levinson (1987), every individual has two types of face, positive and negative. Positive face is defined as the individual's desire to be appreciated in social interaction, and negative face is understood as the individual's desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition.

Furthermore, the theory infers that most speech acts, for example, requests, offers, and compliments, inherently threaten either the Hearer's face or the Speaker's face, and that politeness is involved in rectifying those face threatening acts (FTA). Four main types of politeness strategies were outlined by Brown & Levinson, which are bald-on-record, negative politeness, positive politeness, and off-record or indirect strategy. Brown & Levinson's concentration on strategies of FTAs and their reliance on the cooperative principle, however,

has been criticised as disregarding the area of impoliteness. Many researchers think that the ignorance of the importance of impoliteness, which is a crucial part of the overall theory, has made it impossible for the theory of politeness to be comprehensive. Culpeper (1996, 2005) argues that in order to comprehend theory of politeness, it is fundamental for strategies of impoliteness to be defined and addressed properly. Consequently, this has led us to the theory of impoliteness. In contrast to traditional politeness theories, “post-modern im/politeness work believes that impoliteness is not natural in language and occurs when something is against the norms of a community of practice in particular context” (Culpeper, 2008 p.20). Although the use of impoliteness in particular contexts such as recruit training (Culpeper, 1996), and television series (Culpeper, 2005) is considered acceptable, the same behaviour is regarded as impolite and unacceptable in dissimilar situation. To sum up, it is difficult to identify a universally polite utterance.

### **2.3 Definitions of Impoliteness**

After reviewing several literatures, it is obvious that many researchers have attempted to define impoliteness. Ervin Goffman (1967) refers to impoliteness as aggressive facework which later is supported by Watts (2003). Meanwhile, Lakoff (1989) states that rude behaviour does not utilise politeness strategies where they will be expected, in such a way that the utterance can only almost plausibly be interpreted as intentionally and negatively confrontational. Culpeper (2005) defines impoliteness as a situation where a speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or when the hearer perceives and/or constructs behaviour as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of both. Based on these definitions, even though there are differences, it can be seen that face and intention are the two notable commonalities shared by them. At the same time, Spencer-Oatey (2005) concludes that our assessment of im(politeness) should be restructured to address ‘rapport

management'. She also urges for a more complete view of impoliteness on the basis of the conventional rules and norms of behaviour.

Meanwhile, Mills (2005) states that perceptions of impoliteness rely on interactants' interpretations in a given context to assess what is appropriate, and past incidents that may influence those interpretations. Nevertheless, according to Watts (2005, p.20), "impolite, polite and appropriate behaviour are difficult to assess because it is likely for the social interactants to vary in attributing these evaluations." In other words, the speaker and hearer will unlikely have similar interpretation and will interpret differently with regard to the degree of impoliteness. Although Locher and Bousfield (2008) conclude impoliteness as a face-aggravating behaviour in a particular context, they agree with Watts (2005) that there is no mutual agreement between researchers on what impoliteness actually is. Thus, looking at all the definitions, it can be summarised that researchers are still contemplating on the exact definition of impoliteness, but at the same time the contributions of Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness frameworks in understanding impoliteness cannot be denied. My view is similar to a study by Pennanen (2013) who concludes that Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness frameworks have provided a useful point of departure for many theories on impoliteness.

#### **2.4 Other Notions of Impoliteness**

One of the many researchers who have supported the dynamic approach to describing language use in recent years is Watts (1992, 2003). Some main aspects of his view on politeness and face, are essential for further discussion of these notions in this study. Throughout his book (2003), Watts argues for a radically new way of looking at linguistic



politeness. He wants to show that it is crucial to make a clear difference between the commonsense or lay notion of (im)politeness and the theoretical notion of (im)politeness.

Similarly, the need to differentiate the notions is also emphasized by Eelen (2001). The commonsense notion is referred to as (im)politeness<sub>1</sub>, while (im)politeness<sub>2</sub> is the theoretical notion. Watts (2003, p.p 1-17) mentions that the meanings and connotations of polite and politeness and their similar interpretations in other languages may differ between various groups of speakers and also individual speakers. Some people may have different perceptions that the polite use of language is nonetheless 'hypocritical', 'dishonest' or 'distant'.

Generally, for some people, polite behaviour is equal to socially right behaviour, while for others, it is the symbol of a civilized person. Watts (2003) intends to show the essentially evaluative nature of politeness<sub>1</sub> (as well as impoliteness<sub>1</sub>). Politeness<sub>1</sub> is a socio-psychological notion which socio cultural group members speak about polite language usage, while politeness<sub>2</sub> is a theoretical, linguistic notion in a sociolinguistic theory of politeness. According to him, this should be the main focus of a theory of politeness. Hence, a theory of politeness<sub>2</sub> should focus on the ways in which (im)polite behavior is assessed and commented on by lay people.

Besides his own theory, Bourdieu's (1977) theory of impoliteness on concept of social practice has become the basis for Watts' theory. Based on data from naturally occurring English verbal interaction and his personal experience, he argues that politeness theory and face theory can never be fully equated. He attempts to show that, Goffman's (1967) notion of face has been changed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Thus, he thinks that we should go back to the conceptualization of face theory. Watts states that if we accept Goffman's theory,

the attribute of face socially in agreement with the line or lines we have taken as the reasons for interactions must also be accepted. In other words, different scenarios of verbal interaction with different faces could be assigned by us and the individual's face needs predicate all social interaction, which means that negotiating facework cannot be avoided. A participant will try to avoid face-threats in situations at any cost and take appropriate measures to ensure another participant's face is not damaged. This is what is called supportive facework.

On the other hand, face-threats such as aggressive facework sometimes occur in certain situations. Politic behaviour by Watts (2003) consists of supportive facework and aggressive facework. This term is defined by him as the behaviour during an ongoing social interaction which the participants consider as being polite. Watts defines the notion of politeness<sup>1</sup> as behaviour in excess of politic behaviour, having the uncertainty of the notion (im)polite<sup>1</sup> but allowing more flexibility. Therefore, it is hard to find linguistic structures that can be considered polite. However, some expressions in English such as thank you, and please, are normally considered as politeness utterances. This is called highly conventionalized formulaic. There is also semi formulaic according to Watts (2003), such as *Close the door, will you?* or *Can I have another piece of cake?* Watts' purpose is to show that politeness is not always indicated by linguistic structures. In fact, it depends on the individual's interpretation to decide in ongoing verbal interaction. He states that it is essential for speakers to identify when linguistic structures occur. Thus, the speakers can determine whether they (the linguistic structures) can be considered as politic behaviour or not. Despite the framework presented by Watts, I think it is quite difficult to identify impoliteness strategies using his framework as it is not as clear and comprehensive as Culpeper's. In fact, for me it is very subjective.

Another researcher who has provided us with significant detail on impoliteness is Bousfield (2008). Through his study, impoliteness is described as the contradicting form of politeness. He mentions that impoliteness constitutes the issuing of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face threatening acts which are purposefully performed; 1) unmitigated, in context where mitigation is required, and /or 2) with deliberate aggression, that is with the face threat intentionally exacerbated, 'boosted' or maximised in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted. Bousfield adds that for impoliteness to be considered successful impoliteness, the intention of the speaker (or author) to threaten/ damage face must be understood by those in a receiver role. Face, in his view, is still considered as the best approach to comprehend impoliteness and the reason of intentional offence. He also notes that impoliteness does not occur without reason and it does not appear out of the blue in common situations. Impoliteness can only occur when the interactants are provoked sufficiently at some points. The most essential point is utterance which is perceived as threat to the utterer's face which can trigger impoliteness. Some of his views might concur with other researchers' views, however Culpeper states that impoliteness is the parasite of politeness rather than the opposite of politeness. He also adds that impoliteness does not need to be intentional. This is of course dissimilar with Bousfield's theory.

Although many researchers tried to agree on the idea of impoliteness, there is still no agreement about some of the basics. Hence, in 2011, Culpeper tried to establish those basics based on the data that he collected which among them are video recordings and written texts involving naturally occurring impoliteness, 100 informant reports, corpus report and impoliteness perception questionnaire using the model of politeness strategy.

## **2.5 Definition of Impoliteness (Culpeper, 2011)**

According to Culpeper (2011, p.23):

Impoliteness is a negative attitude towards specific behaviour occurring in a specific context. It is sustained by expectations, desires, and/or beliefs about social organisation, including, in particular, how one person's or a group's identities are mediated by others in interaction. Situated behaviours are viewed negatively- considered 'impolite'- when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they ought to be. Such behaviours always have or are presumed to have emotional consequences for at least one participant, that is, they cause or are presumed to cause offence. Various factors can aggravate how offensive an impolite behaviour is taken to be, including for example whether one understands a behaviour to be strongly intentional or not.

Although Brown and Levinson believe that impoliteness is just minor in our daily lives, data collected by Culpeper based on his previous research prove that it is inherent in current daily lives. This has become the base for the model of impoliteness strategies by Culpeper (2011). Culpeper's theory believes that intention and context play an inherent part to categorize a circumstance as polite or impolite, whereby Brown and Levinson (1987) focus only on face and based their theoretical assumptions on data on just three languages: English, Tzeltal and Tamil. Culpeper's theory will be explained in the following section.

## **2.6 Culpeper's Impoliteness Strategies**

In his latest book, *Impoliteness: Using and Understanding the Language of Offence* (2011), Culpeper lists down several concepts that relate to impoliteness which consist of face, experiential norms, social norms and rights and morality.

### 2.6.1 Face

First of all, face concept. Status and self-confidence can be affected by face element. In addition, the damage of one's public image or reputation will lead to emotional sadness. By understanding face, the way impoliteness event occurs could also be comprehended. Goffman (1967) defines 'face' as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes". (p.5)

Essentially, this means that people want to get positive impressions about them from others. However, it is important to note besides associating ourselves with positive values, what others assume about us is also vital, which can be much more complicated. Generally, it means that how others feel about us plays an important role in how we feel about ourselves. Therefore, losing face makes one worry about the impressions of others.

Dealing with the concept of face is difficult as each of us does not have the same idea on what is considered as a positive value. A typical example is people who are aggressive or loud might be treated differently; they can be highly appreciated in one group but not in another.

### 2.6.2 Experiential norms

When one experiences similar social situations repeatedly, he or she may be able to expect certain type of communication to occur. Besides that, he or she will also be able to predict others' expectations and recognise how to meet or break them. Opp (1982) suggests that

repeated behaviours help people to have predictions. The predictions will assist them to gain some assurance. People are normally interested to know the coming situations. Social cognition researchers also emphasize this interesting point. Kellerman and Reynolds (1990, p.14), state that “generally, deviations from expectations are judged negatively”. However, this is only an argument regarding *general* expectations. Meanwhile, things can become more complex in interaction, as the interaction is likely to become a norm. Paradoxically, it is important to note that violation of expectations may also become positive.

### 2.6.3 Social norms and rights

A number of common characteristics of behaviour may overlap with social norms. According to Anderson (2000, p.17) quoted by Culpeper (2011), “a social norm is a standard of behaviour shared by a social group, commonly understood by its members as authoritative or obligatory for them”. In addition, Gilbert (1989) quoted by Culpeper (2011) states that, belonging to a social group means that norms that the group shares should be accepted by the members, and the readiness to accept them should be seen by others. She states that rebellious behaviour, similar to impoliteness, can provoke strong responses because it involves relationships with others and raises question on appropriate behaviour in those relationships. Comparable rules of behaviour may occur due to some social norms, which are strengthened by public punishment. For instance, littering is considered violating a public rule. Thus, if one breaks the rule, sanctions such as fine will be imposed on him. Another example is using impolite language such as abusive, threatening or aggressive language towards other religions or races is clearly prohibited. This is supported by social institutions and bodies such as legal system. Those who break it will face sanctions which are imposed by the authorities. Additionally, if society members internalised the social norms, disapproval from others or guilty feeling in oneself can also become a form of sanction.

It is important to note that social norms are context-sensitive. In some situations, inappropriate behaviours are accepted and recognized. This normally is caused by the imbalance of power, for instance; in army recruit training. However, it might differ in other situations (Harris, 2001).

#### 2.6.4 Morality

Moral outrage could happen due to impoliteness as it breaks social norms of behaviour. Social norms include the management of face during interaction. The key to this is how people respond to face attack in interaction. Counter-threat response is expected in return of a threat, and thus a speaker has a vested interest in maintaining the hearer's face, since this will enhance the probability of reciprocal support (cf. Goffman, 1967; Brown & Levinson, 1987). Immorality could occur when someone fails to return politeness with politeness. This is considered as breaching the commonly-known social standard. The negative side of reciprocity is it fuels a conflict spiral, as work on aggression has shown. For example, if somebody thought that he/she is verbally attacked, normally they feel justified in retaliating.

From internalised social norms, come moral standards of behaviour. According to Tangney et al. (2007, p.346-7) quoted by Culpeper (2011), "They primarily involve behaviours which have negative consequences for others and about which there is a broad social consensus that they are wrong. They are linked to moral intentions, moral emotions and moral behaviours". For example, a moral standard is considered violated when a child fails to say thank you to somebody who has given him an expensive gift. A parent may feel angry or annoyed (a moral emotion), but decides to improve the situation (a moral intention), and reminds the child by whispering to him (a moral, pro-social behaviour). Morality is an important element which is shaped by social standard and what social organisation believes in. Morality is linked to a set

of emotions - moral emotions. Haidt (2003, p.855) quoted by Culpeper (2011) divides negative moral emotions into two groups:

1. "Other-condemning" emotions: anger, disgust and contempt, and
2. "Self-conscious" emotions: embarrassment, shame and guilt.

Culpeper suggested that impoliteness violations of social norms are more likely to trigger other-condemning emotions, whilst violations of face are more likely to trigger self-conscious emotions. However, face-violations could additionally involve other-condemning emotions if the face-attack is considered unfair.

In his study using diary-type data of impoliteness occurrences, Culpeper asked informants to describe their feelings, and then he analysed the emotion labels they used. For events involving face loss, the bulk of the emotion labels, 70%, belonged to the general emotion category "sadness", a self-conscious emotion, and contained labels such as *embarrassed*, *humiliated*, *stupid*, *hurt* and *upset*. Thus the first part of the prediction was supported. However, for events involving sociality rights, "sadness" was *still* the most densely populated category, accounting for 48.6%. Nevertheless, the dominance of this category was much less. In contrast, we see a dramatic increase in the general emotion category "anger", which now accounted for 27% (for face loss events, it had accounted for only 14.3% of the labels), and contained labels such as *angry* and *annoyed*.

Overall, it seems to be the case that self-conscious emotions dominate impoliteness events. However, this is most true of events involving face and least true of events involving social rights, where "anger", another-condemning emotion, takes on increased importance. Rights have more to do with injustices being done that involve others and have weaker implications for the self.



## 2.6.5 Forms of Impoliteness

Some words and structures are more regularly perceived as impolite than others. The following are all regularly used in Culpeper's (2011) data and result in a negative reaction from the target (i.e. they took offence). Needless to say, using any particular form does not guarantee that the target will be offended - that depends on the context in which it is used. Although Culpeper has categorized the strategies, it is very context-dependent. There are nine categories based on the data he collected. The first one is insults which are divided into four sub-strategies, followed by pointed criticisms, challenging questions, condescensions, message enforcers, dismissal, silencers, threats and negative expressive. Square brackets are designed to give an indication of some of the structural characteristics of the strategies and alternatives are indicated with slashes.

### a) Insults

1. *Personalized negative vocatives*
  - [you] [[fucking/rotten/dirty/fat/little/etc.] [moron/fuck/plonker/dickhead/berk/pig/shit/bastard/loser/liar/etc.]] [you]
2. *Personalized negative assertions*
  - [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.]
  - [you] [can't do] [anything right/basic arithmetic/etc.]
  - [you] [disgust/make] [me] [sick/etc.]
3. *Personalized negative references*
  - [your] [little/stinking] [mouth/act/arse/body/etc.]
4. *Personalized third-person negative references in the hearing of the target*
  - [the] [daft] [bimbo]
  - [she's] [nutzo]

### b) Pointed criticisms/complaints

- [that/this/it] [is/was] [absolutely/extraordinarily/unspeakably/etc.] [bad/rubbish/crap/horrible/terrible/etc.]

### **c) Challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions**

- 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?

### **d) Condescensions**

- [that] ['s/being] [babyish/childish/etc.]

### **e) Message enforcers**

- listen here (as a preface)
- you got it? (as a tag)
- read my lips
- do you understand [me]? (as a tag)

### **f) Dismissals**

- [go] [away]
- [get] [lost/out]
- [fuck/piss/shove] [off]

### **g) Silencers**

- [shut] [it/your mouth, face/etc.]
- [shut] [the fuck] up

### **h) Threats**

- [I'll] [I'm/we're gonna] [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]
- [X] [before I] [hit you/strangle you]

### **i) Negative Expressive (Curses and ill-wishes)**

- [go] [to hell/hang yourself/fuck yourself]
- [damn/fuck] [you]

## **2.7 Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)**

When technology era commenced in the early to mid- 1990's, the main reasons why people used computer at that time were to process information, transfer data and design hardware. Emailing, chatting and surfing, nevertheless, have become popular starting from mid-1990's which has attracted scholarly attention to CMC.

### **2.7.1 What is Computer Mediated Communication?**

There are many definitions of CMC. According to Santoro (1995), "at its broadest, CMC can encompass virtually all computer users including such diverse applications as statistical analysis programs, remote-sensing systems, and financial modelling programs, all fit within the concept of human communication" (p.11). December (1997) states that CMC is a method of communication via computer by human. It involves people who engage in certain context, using media for different purposes. Yet another 'classic' definition is proposed by Herring (1996 p.1), a scholar who has also been associated with the field for some time where she explains that "CMC is a communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers."

Meanwhile, Locher (2010) defines CMC as the exchange of communication among interactants using electronic devices namely mobile phones or computers. Herring (2001 p. 621) mentions that "one characteristic feature, especially of many text-based CMC modes of communication (e.g. blog, emails) is that they are 'anonymous' (faceless, bodiless) forms of interaction".

Since twenty years ago, CMC has fascinated linguist, communication researchers and sociologist and quite a number of researches has been done on CMC. However, it is interesting to note that the majority of texts published on CMC to date have not focused on politeness or impoliteness issues (Locher, 2010).

### **2.7.2 Political Communication in CMC**

The internet has certainly created new opportunities for people from all over the world to connect with others about politics. People now are able to communicate across national borders without having to travel or show a passport. This somehow gives the chance to people who are oppressed or ruled by an autocratic government to voice out their dissatisfactions. As people can be connected easily through CMC, reaching more people around the globe, talking on behalf of oppressed group, or criticising the government has become a simpler task. The most significant of all, events on the ground, which may conflict with how they are being reported in the mainstream media can be shown and discussed using CMC. This is truly the power of CMC.

Based on the significance mentioned above, therefore it can be said that CMC is both political and politicizing, due to the fact that it can be used as a medium to confront the authority of governing powers, and to reject the monopoly in social, cultural and political ideologies. In brief, CMC allows us to have more than one perspective regarding current events and plays an important role in helping people to have an active political participation in political processes. Indeed, online communication increases people's awareness on politics, democracy and common acceptance. (Thurlow, Lengel & Tomic, 2004). At the same time, according to Postmes, Spears and Lea, (1998), the opportunity to be anonymous in the CMC gives people more freedom and space to express different views and this does not

always happen in face-to-face interaction. Hence, this is one of the factors why CMC becomes a suitable medium for political communication.

### **2.7.3 Past Studies on Impoliteness in CMC**

According to Locher (2010), researchers have not given enough attention and focus to politeness and impoliteness within CMC, yet it is easier to find studies on politeness compared to impoliteness. However, some researchers recently tried to investigate into this field of study. Lorenzo-Dus, Blitrich and Bou-Franch (2011) investigated impoliteness strategies used by commenters in Youtube based on a political campaign video shown on Youtube. They found that there was a similarity in the individual impoliteness strategies used with previous literature on multi-party context in CMC.

Neurauter-Kessels (2011) studied the occurrence of impoliteness in written conversation between the readers and reporters. He agreed with Herring (2001) who stated that many text-based CMC modes of communication have one characteristic feature: it is an anonymous type of interaction, where variables such as non-verbal cues are not available. In his study, Neurauter-Kessel found that a growing number of users wrote extremely impolite comments. He suggested that the privilege of being anonymous in the web is the main reason. Being anonymous gave advantage to the users to avoid being responsible for their misbehavior. They would also not be afraid of losing their face or damaging their public image as they could hide their true identity. His finding concurred with Suler (2004) who stated that people reacted differently when they were face to face and when they were online. When they were face to face with an authority figure, normally they would not say directly what was on their minds to avoid punishment or disapproval. On the other hand, communicating through online

made them not afraid to speak out or behave inappropriately, since they did not see each other.

Another study by Pennanen (2013) investigated how impoliteness was realized and structured in CMC, in the way of how lay people used impoliteness. He mentioned that it is important to note that in CMC, many aspects of face to face communications were missing. Therefore, there is no clear way for the interlocutors to share paralinguistic cues. Similar opinion is voiced by Kruger et al. (2005) who stated that paralinguistic cues such as gestures, voice or expression could not be shared through CMC. Pennanen (2013) in his study also mentioned previous studies by Sproull and Kiesler (1991) who noticed that when a group was arranged to speak anonymously, flaming was especially extreme.

Some experiments were carried out by the two researchers to determine how group interaction and decision making could be affected by computer mediated communication (CMC). Sproull and Kiesler (1991) tested their hypothesis on groups of three students who were given a choice-dilemma problem. The students were asked to seek agreement in three different situations. The first situation was face to face agreement, followed by using the computer anonymously, and lastly using the computer without hiding their identities. In all three experiments, it could be seen that there was a significant effect of CMC on the students' interpersonal behaviour and "people in CMC groups were more uninhibited than they were in face-to-face groups, as measured by uninhibited verbal behaviour, defined as frequency of remarks containing swearing, insults, name calling and hostile comments" (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991, p.1129). This concurred with Haslam et al. (1998) and Postmes et al. (2002) who found that disagreement and conflicts became more pronounced in anonymous groups. Postmes et al. (1998) and others have also theorized that anonymity in CMC resulted in conformity, anti-social online behaviour, and other de-individuating effects (Postmes, Spears, Sakhel, & de Groot, 2001; Valacich, Dennis, & Nunamaker, 1992; Wallace, 1999). In

addition to that, flaming in CMC context was where the actions such as name calling and insult became more extreme and impulsive. Pennanen (2013) also found that offensive-offensive pair did exist and these structures appeared frequently in CMC. The reason for this was anonymity. This finding conflicted with previous hypothesis done by Culpeper et al. (2003) and Bousfield (2008) where they agreed that offensive-offensive pair was not noted as a pattern of impolite conversation. Therefore the anonymity that occurred in this medium could increase the interlocutors' willingness to be impolite (Pennanen, 2013).

## **2.74 Flaming in CMC**

Flaming is a terminology used to describe computer user's uninhibited verbal behaviour. Sproull and Kiesler (1984, p.1128) state that flaming in CMC includes "swearing, shouting at their terminals, and groups refusing to make a group decision until a group member gave in". According to Kim and Raja (1991, p.7), flaming is "to abuse, make offensive comments, or criticize sharply" while Matheson and Zanna (1990, p.1) define flaming as "using offensive language and being interpersonally insulting". Others, according to Baron (1984, p.130) think of it as "speaking incessantly, hurling insults, using profanity."

In a study on organizational communication, Sproull and Kiesler (1986) identified that "e-mail reduced social context cues, provided information that was relatively self-absorbed, undifferentiated by status, uninhibited, and provided new information" and "people behaved irresponsibly more often on e-mail than they did in face-to-face conversations" (p. 1509) because it "removed social reminders of norms" (p. 1510) In addition, they reported that "respondents who saw flaming in e-mail messages an average of 33 times a month, only saw the same kinds of verbal behavior in face-to-face conversations an average of 4 times a month." Apart from that, they also identified the rising tendency to tell bad or wrong information and a social convention flouting in their discussion of uninhibited verbal

behaviour. They highlighted a specific convention which was about the limit between work and play. Findings showed that nearly half of all e-mail exchange in the organization studied, were on movie reviews, recipes or notices of club meetings, and had nothing at all to do with work. In brief, they determined that "evidence that electronic mail reduced social context cues, provided information that was relatively self-absorbed, undifferentiated by status, uninhibited, and provided new information" (p. 1509).

Later, Siegel et al. (1986) revealed their findings on the effect of CMC based on a study at Carnegie-Mellon University. In this study, they investigated how interpersonal behaviour, communication efficiency and participation could be affected by CMC. They noted at first that CMC communication channel was basically in the form of written text. In addition, it did not have enough audio and visual cues compared to phone conversation or face-to-face interaction.

Additionally, they identified that "submergence in technology, and technologically-induced anonymity and weak social feedback might also lead to feelings of loss of identity and uninhibited behavior which lead to deindividuated, leading not just to uninhibited verbal behavior and more equal participation," (p. 183). Siegel et al. (1986) also highlighted the finding that the incidence of uninhibited verbal behavior may hinge on the direction of the communicator's attention.

A study by Smilowitz, Compton and Flint (1988) used Asch's social influence experiment as the basis to determine how the absence of contextual cues in CMC affected individual perception. Their study revealed that "it is easier for a deviant to persist in the CMC environment. Since the effect of the majority opinion is diminished, individuals with deviant opinions are more likely to hold out than to succumb" (p. 320). According to them, this is



because of missing physical cues, lack of non-verbal cues and reduced sense of the presence of others.

Another study on CMC was done by Chesebro and Bonsall (1989). They revealed that when people used computer to communicate, they conquered it and it was "merely a kind of elaborate typewriter and delivery system" (p. 97), however it did affect the users. They noted the potential of CMC to reduce a person's sense of personal responsibility to others, since they could always hide their characters and use fake identities to interact with others. Another character of 'uninhibited behavior' that they identified was "an extension of the concept of 'football widow' to take in the complaints of wives whose husbands appeared so engrossed in their computers as to have no time for social interaction." (p.120). The study also identified conflicts due to flaming, "more time and more words must be employed during teleconferencing to eliminate problems and conflicts" (p. 123). Coordinating meaning became complicated due to the absence of informational feedback.

Continuing from the result that CMC users have a high tendency to depict uninhibited verbal behaviour, an experimental study by Matheson and Zanna (1990) examined the relationship between CMC and deindividuation. 'Deindividuation', according to them is the lack of public and private self-consciousness. When deindividuation occurs, the user loses touch with how they should behave and accept social sanctions from others. It is noticeable that the CMC user group's private self-consciousness is higher and public self-consciousness is lower compared to face-to-face group during problem solving. A hypothesis is made that when private self-consciousness is high, users are more sensitive with the behaviour of others towards them, but have a low level of sensitivity on what others think and feel. This may lead to flaming. Siegel et al. (1986) concluded that this could lead to disagreement and conflict, and computer users would show an increase of uninhibited behaviour.

The significance of this study is it challenges the findings by Kiesler et al. (1984, 1985) and Siegel et al. (1986) which showed that CMC users lose both their private and public self-awareness when they are too engrossed with computer communication.

Smolensky, Carmody, and Halcomb (1990) in their research tried to find out when and how CMC would trigger the tendency of uninhibited verbal behaviour. They found out that people who did not know each other had the highest amount of uninhibited verbal behaviour, and the highest levels of uninhibited verbal behaviour was shown by the most extroverted people. It is interesting to note that groups with high levels of natural verbal behaviour were not really productive when they made decisions in group. The hypothesis here is that due to lack of social appearance and contextual cues in CMC, users tend to view their correspondence “as semi-mechanical objects which can be ignored, insulted, exploited, or hurt with relative impunity” (Christie, 1976 p. 269). An interesting point raised by them is that future research should be carried out to identify whether the figure of creativity in groups shall reduce if the figure of CMC usage is restricted to a certain limit.

Boshier (1990) states that flaming is similar to the use of emoticons in CMC context, where the purpose is to give more emotion and feelings to the basic text. Based on his study, Boshier concludes that flaming occurs due to the distance between the receiver and sender, where they could not see each other face-to-face, which, he hypothesizes that the behaviour will disappear if the receiver and sender talk face-to-face. At the same time, he thinks flaming is one form of stimulation in e-mail. However, he states that the behaviour of some readers who create heated situation by cruelly correcting other people’s grammar is considered 'tedious'.

In 1991, Sproull and Kiesler wrote a book titled *Connections* (1991) which discussed in detail about how organizations use CMC. The authors suggested that due to inadequate social

context cues in CMC, it actually created a new social environment. Although communication occurred, in reality they were alone, sitting in front of their computers. They noted that online communication depended on plain text to exchange messages, appearing and disappearing from the screen but not long-lasting. Naturally it was temporary. The two important characteristics of online communication were the main reasons why users tended to forget their correspondence and freed themselves from the common traditional rules and norms of behaviour. Unclear social restrictions is another factor that contributed to the existence of uninhibited verbal behaviour because there was no indication of status cues in plain text message, unless the status was mentioned or signed under the message. Lack of clues in the message about a person's personal detail would lead to hierarchical position independence. By being anonymous, people would feel free from others' criticisms and restrictions. Anonymity gave them confidence to communicate anything with anybody. "Anonymity also makes it easy for them to disagree with, confront, or take exception to others' opinion" (p.49).

Previous literatures have been consistently supporting the hypothesis that the degree of natural verbal behaviour in CMC rises because of the absence of social context cues. Many researchers have done further research to identify the effects of the new social environment. It can be seen that in both past and recent literatures, the authors agree with the theory that inadequate social context cues within a CMC environment cause the rise in flaming (Collins, 1992). As CMC and anonymity is closely related to each other, I believe that flaming will occur in most CMC context due to the privilege of being anonymous and lack of social cues.

## **2.8 Facebook**

The immense of technology has encouraged the growth of social network via Internet. People prefer to communicate through these as they can reach people anywhere in the world in a short time. Hampton, Goulet, Rainie and Purcell (2011) define social networking as a medium with some similar features. The similarities are the ability of users to make friends' list, to write their comments on other people's pages and statuses, to show their approval on another user's content by clicking the button 'like' and lastly, to write and send message to others privately. All of these criteria work as the basic criteria that exist on social networking. Social networking was unique compared to the other mediated communication because not only the members are able to meet strangers, they can also communicate and show their social networks (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Among the popular social network are Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and Youtube. According to eMarketer ([www.eMarketer.com](http://www.eMarketer.com)), a digital marketing analysis firm, Facebook maintains its position as the number one social network followed by Google+ and Youtube. Although Facebook fell to second place behind Twitter for the most popular social network among teens, globally it is undeniable that Facebook is still the most popular among all ages. With 1.1 billion people worldwide using it, Facebook users are predicted to grow higher by end of 2013 ([www.eMarketer.com](http://www.eMarketer.com), 2013). This is similar to a research done by GlobalWebIndex. People connect with each other in social network using Facebook for a range of purposes, including business, amusement, find friends, dates and information sharing (Dwyer et.al, 2007). The impact of Facebook is inarguably strong as it becomes the medium of campaign and voting registration during the US Election 2008, where Obama calls the election as Facebook election. This is due to the involvement of Facebook where politicians use it to promote themselves and also the role of Facebook in attracting the young generation to be involved in voting and election campaign. In fact, the "Facebook effect" has been named as a major factor for the second largest youth voter turnout in American history, during the 2008

presidential election. At the same time, Facebook forces media to provide reflective coverage. These days, politicians choose to post contents using their Facebook accounts to attract more viewers and stay connected with their supporters. Their supporters will be able to see the contents and show their responses by commenting. Media, instead of reporting on the message itself, provide coverage on people's reactions to a politician's message. In brief, the traditional, interrogatory reporting of the press is now being replaced with a new way of coverage where the press focuses on trending issues instead of new stories. (About.com, 2012).

### 2.8.1 Facebook and Political Communication

Facebook was introduced by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. It was originally a community of college students sharing information and opinion. Each member had a home page where they could put their profiles including birth date, interests and employment. Members could send message to each other privately or publicly. Public message would be posted on another member's "wall". Since it was free and only required the member to register an e-mail address to set an account, the number of memberships kept increasing and the members varied from academic institutions to cities dwellers to employers (Westling, 2007). The simple features it had, became a suitable platform for political communication. The interesting features in Facebook are like "groups" and "events". Each of these features has its own home page showing profiles, photos, and a message board. There are a few types of groups; Open groups where everyone can join, closed groups which is only for invited members, and private groups. Each group has its own administrator, who is normally the person who created the group. Group administrator is the one who manages and controls all the posts in the group. Interestingly, through Facebook, community members have the

opportunity and platform to give opinions and share their views on certain issues with their politicians. Although Facebook cannot guarantee that the politicians will reply or response, at least the politicians will be aware of the real situations and people's dissatisfaction.

Facebook administrators created an "Election Pulse" section by creating profiles for all candidates running for federal or gubernatorial office for the 2006 mid-term elections in USA. A password and login was given to each campaign team so that they could update their candidate's profile and contents. Besides that, they could also add other useful information about the candidates in their profiles.

According to a study by Christine Williams and Jeff Gulati, Bentley College political science professors, about a third of U.S senate candidates updated their Facebook profile for the 2006 campaign (Westling, 2007). Similar action was taken by about half of Governor Candidates. Indeed, every campaign for each office in Wisconsin in 2006 was registered on Facebook and active. This is a very interesting fact as it showed the power of Facebook in political communication. Furthermore, Facebook members were able to show their support for any candidate by listing themselves as supporters in Facebook. Some candidates, such as Senator Jim Webb provided comprehensive biographies and resumes on their Facebook pages, while others, such as Webb's opponent, Senator George Allen, did not do so. In fact, he only gave basic contact information. As a result, it could be seen that candidates who gathered much more support in the Facebook community were those who kept their supporters updated with information through their Facebook profiles. Statistics showed that U.S. Senate candidates who actively posted on Facebook had more supporters (an average of 2,429 supporters). In contrast, those who did not, had an average of only 429 supporters. Besides posting

information and updates, candidates could also write using blog-type posts method and get comments or responses from supporters.

One of the most important outcomes of Facebook in political communication is the members have the privilege to send messages directly to politicians. In Facebook, a message board in the candidate's profile which is called 'wall', is the place where members can post any message. The message board or 'wall' can be found below the candidate's profile and it can be viewed by all members.

Most of the messages sent by members are to show approval, enquire or request action on a particular issue. However, there are also others which contain negative, sometimes harsh, impolite criticism posted on the wall of the politician's Facebook. The post can be deleted. However it is impossible to monitor all comments due to large numbers of messages they received, that can reach thousands of comments. Clearly, it will consume a lot of time to filter all the comments or messages. Politicians have an option if they want to turn off the wall feature entirely, but by turning off the wall, they will not be able to communicate with their supporters as nobody can post or communicate with the politicians due to this. Westling (2007) concluded that "Facebook is not about to become the primary means of communication for political campaign but encourages and assists political communication, and has the potential to become a major hub for political action among community members" (p.12)

The originality of Facebook (in the context of CMC), especially in communication is the main reason why it is chosen as a platform of this study.

## **2.9 Summary**

In this chapter, I have discussed about politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987), various impoliteness definitions and other notions of impoliteness. I have also given some details about Culpeper's 2011 framework that I have adopted to investigate, computer-mediated communication in terms of politeness and impoliteness, communities of practice and Facebook. In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology that I used to carry out my study.



## **CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the qualitative approach used to carry out this study in order to identify the types of impoliteness strategies used by the Facebookers, and the factors that contribute to the perception of impoliteness. With this, the following sections describe specifically the sampling involved, instruments used, data gathering techniques as well as data analysis method involved throughout the research period. The emerging pattern was then identified, interpreted, analyzed and summarized in order to generate results.

This study adopts Culpeper's Impoliteness Strategies (2011) to identify the existence of impoliteness in the Facebookers comments and the types of impoliteness strategies they frequently used. The theoretical framework is based on nine strategies found by Culpeper in most of his data. In addition to Culpeper's impoliteness strategies, this study has also looked at the factors that contribute to the perception of impoliteness based on previous studies by different researchers.

Few researches in the past tried to analyse impoliteness in the context of CMC. Most of the research focused on face-to-face interactions. Fortunately, there were some studies lately that discussed (im)politeness theories in CMC context (Graham, 2007, 2008; Lorenzo-Dus, Blitvich & Bou-Franch, 2011; Neurater-Kessels, 2011). Their findings had contributed much in helping us to interpret impoliteness in CMC. However, a majority of these studies had been carried out using qualitative methods. In order to answer the first research question, qualitative method was chosen and a framework based on Culpeper's Model of Impoliteness (2011) as shown below was used to answer the first research question. Meanwhile, for the second research question, qualitative design was used to look at the possible contributing factors, along with past studies to support the factors. Next, data and procedure were described. Lastly, methodological advantages and disadvantages of the dataset were explained.

Table 3.1 Impoliteness strategies by Culpeper (2011)

Conceptual orientation	Impoliteness strategies
1. Face	insults
	pointed criticisms/complaints
	negative expressives
	unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions
2. Equity rights	condescensions
	message enforcers
	dismissal

	silencers
	threats

From Table 3.1, it can be seen that Culpeper has built a conventionalised formulae that reflect the regularities in his data. He has divided the conceptual orientations into two: face and equity rights. As mentioned earlier in Section 2.6.1, the infringement of face concept can affect status and self-confidence. Dealing with the concept of face is considered challenging as everybody might perceive differently on what positive value is (Culpeper, 2011). Meanwhile, equity rights are not considered face issues. The violation of equity rights may simply lead to annoyance or irritation rather than losing face (Spencer-Oatey, 2007). Based on Culpeper's data, impoliteness formulae are divided into four strategies for face and five for equity rights. Under each strategy, Culpeper has given the key elements to indicate the impoliteness behaviour in Table 3.2.

From Table 3.2, it can be seen that the impoliteness strategies under face concept are insults, pointed criticisms, negative expressive and unpalatable questions. Insults are sub-divided into four categories which are personalised negative vocatives, personalized negative assertions, personalized negative references and personalized third-person negative references. Personalized negative vocatives consist of name calling such as 'you moron/fuck/pig/shit/bastard/loser/liar/etc' while personalized negative assertions are negative forceful statement to describe a person without support or evidence. For instance, 'you are so stupid' or 'you are such a hypocrite'. Meanwhile, personalized negative references used reference such as 'your little stinking mouth' to insult a person. The last category for insults

strategy is using third person negative references in the hearing of the target such as 'she's a nutzo'.

The second strategy is pointed criticisms where criticisms and complaints are the strategies used to attack the face of the Hearer, for example; 'This is absolutely rubbish'. The third strategy is negative expressive. This strategy used curses and ill wishes to attack the Hearer's face, for instance; 'Go to hell'. The final strategy under face concept is unpalatable questions. In this strategy, questions are used to attack the Hearer's face. A typical example would be 'Which lie are you telling me?'

The second conceptual orientation in Culpeper's impoliteness strategies is equity rights. It has five types of impoliteness strategies. Firstly, condescensions. This strategy is used when the speaker wants to show superiority over the Hearer, for example; 'That's childish'. The second strategy is message enforcers. The speaker emphasized on what he/she said just to annoy the Hearer, for instance; 'You got it?' or 'Do you understand me?' The following strategy is dismissal. This strategy is used to make the Hearer shun from the conversation or argument by dismissing them impolitely, such as by saying 'Get lost' or 'Go away'. The fourth strategy is silencers. This strategy is quite similar to dismissal but particularly to make someone shut their mouth or stop speaking. For instance, 'Shut your mouth' or 'Shut the fuck up'. Finally, the last strategy under equity rights is threats. This strategy is used to make someone frightened or annoyed, for example; by saying 'I'm gonna smash your head' or 'I'm gonna box your ears'. These strategies and key elements appeared regularly in Culpeper's (2011) data hence they were listed.

Table 3.2 Impoliteness Strategies and the key elements

<b>Insults</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Personalized negative vocatives</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ [you] [[fucking/rotten/dirty/fat/little/etc.] [moron/fuck/plonker/dickhead/berk/pig/shit/bastard/loser/liar/etc.]] [you]</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. <i>Personalized negative assertions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ [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.]</li> <li>○ [you] [can't do] [anything right/basic arithmetic/etc.]</li> <li>○ [you] [disgust/make] [me] [sick/etc.]</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. <i>Personalized negative references</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ [your] [little/stinking] [mouth/act/arse/body/etc.]</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. <i>Personalized third-person negative references in the hearing of the target</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ [the] [daft] [bimbo]</li> <li>○ [she's] [nutzo]</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>Pointed criticisms/complaints</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [that/this/it] [is/was] [absolutely/extraordinarily/unspeakably/etc.] [bad/rubbish/crap/horrible/terrible/etc.]</li> </ul>
<b>Negative Expressive (Curses and ill-wishes)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [go] [to hell/hang yourself/fuck yourself]</li> <li>• [damn/fuck] [you]</li> </ul>
<b>Challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• why do you make my life impossible?</li> <li>• which lie are you telling me?</li> <li>• what's gone wrong now?</li> <li>• you want to argue with me or you want to go to jail?</li> </ul>

<b>Condescensions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [that] ['s/being] [babyish/childish/etc.]</li> </ul>
<b>Message enforcers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listen here (as a preface)</li> <li>• you got it? (as a tag)</li> <li>• read my lips</li> <li>• do you understand [me]? (as a tag)</li> </ul>
<b>Dismissals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [go] [away]</li> <li>• [get] [lost/out]</li> <li>• [fuck/piss/shove] [off]</li> </ul>
<b>Silencers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [shut] [it/your mouth, face/etc.]</li> <li>• [shut] [the fuck] up</li> </ul>
<b>Threats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [I'll] [I'm/we're gonna] [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]</li> <li>• [X] [before I] [hit you/strangle you]</li> </ul>

### 3.2 Participants

Data collection was done based on a purposeful sampling. This means that although the participants were among the Facebook users, only those who made comments on the politician's page which led to disagreement or impoliteness were considered participants and their comments were analysed. Participants were mixed between females and males, where based on their profiles, majority of them were males. However, it was difficult to determine the exact number of each gender as some of them did not display information about their gender and used 'neutral' names which did not portray their gender. The gender identity was based on names provided by participants and also from the gender shown in their profiles. However, it was difficult to determine the gender as the respondents could always create fake accounts since Facebook only needed people to provide their email when registering. This is

understandable as some people prefer to be anonymous in order to feel less accountable or at risk for what they write. Besides that, age group was also hard to determine as majority did not display their age in their profiles. Regarding the participants' comments, some of them commented more than once, however it was not taken into account because this study focused on the comments, not the participants. Only members who gave comments were considered respondents, and only comments that contained impoliteness strategies based on Culpeper (2011) were considered as data. People who comment on a public page like this should be aware that their comments are read and observed by other people. Based on Herring (1996), on ethically responsible research in CMC, it is safe to say that the study is being done using an unrestricted public space on this online social, thus no permission is needed from the participants.

### **3.3 Instruments**

The purpose of this study is to look at how impolite behaviour works. In order to achieve this purpose, data was collected through the comments given by the members of the page. To get access to the page is not difficult as anybody can search for the politician's name in Facebook. For this study, Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim (DSAI) Facebook page was chosen as the page where data would be collected. He is a Malaysia Opposition Political Leader. His page was chosen to be part of the study as his page was one of the most active pages with more than 700,000 members and new status were being updated every day (Socialbakers.com, 2012). In fact, his page ranked as the fourth most popular page in Malaysia in 2012 (refer to Appendix F). Furthermore, the responses and comments received on his page were also overwhelming, including impolite comments.



Normally, a status written by the politician will be responded by at least 50 comments and the controversial ones (especially on current issues) can receive up to 500 comments. However, as only comments in English will be considered as data, it had been a challenging task as well to collect rich data as most of the statuses and comments were in Malay language. Comments given by Facebook users that contain impoliteness were considered materials in this research. In this study, five statuses from a politician's Facebook page were selected. From 2364 comments, 148 comments were identified to fit into the categories in Impoliteness Strategies based on Culpeper framework. Three other comments found in my data were mentioned by Culpeper (2011) but not categorized under his Impoliteness strategies as they are more into gesture strategies and not verbal. Statuses selected were from October 2011 until May 2013.

### **3.4 Procedures**

The first step taken in collecting data was to join some politicians' Facebook pages. After browsing through their pages and reading the statuses and comments, Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim's page was chosen as the platform to collect data. This is due to the overwhelming responses for every status and the page also has one million members. There were also many impolite comments which made his page as the best medium for me to collect rich data. Next, I started to shortlist some of the statuses that were considered controversial and received overwhelming responses. However, as this was taken from a Malay politician and most of the commenters were Malay, it was quite challenging to find impolite comments in English. Nevertheless, I managed to get 151 impolite comments using English language from 2364 comments collected.

After collecting 151 impolite comments from the data, impoliteness strategies based on Culpeper's framework were identified for each of the impolite comments. First, the comments were observed and 151 comments that contain impolite words were analysed. Next, the comments were categorized according to Culpeper's (2011) model of impoliteness strategies. The comments were categorized based on the words used by Facebookers which were similar to the key elements in Culpeper's impoliteness strategies. At first, there were 68 comments that were not similar with key elements in Culpeper's impoliteness strategies. To categorize these comments, I had sought advice from Culpeper himself through email (refer to Appendix G for sample of email correspondence). Based on his advice, I managed to categorize 65 comments under his strategies. The other three comments using gesture strategy were categorized under new strategy called gesture-verbal strategy. Later, the most frequently used impoliteness strategies according to Culpeper's theory were identified to answer the first research question. After that, in order to answer the second research question, based on the study which was done in CMC setting, factors that contribute to impoliteness in the Facebook comments were analysed and discussed.

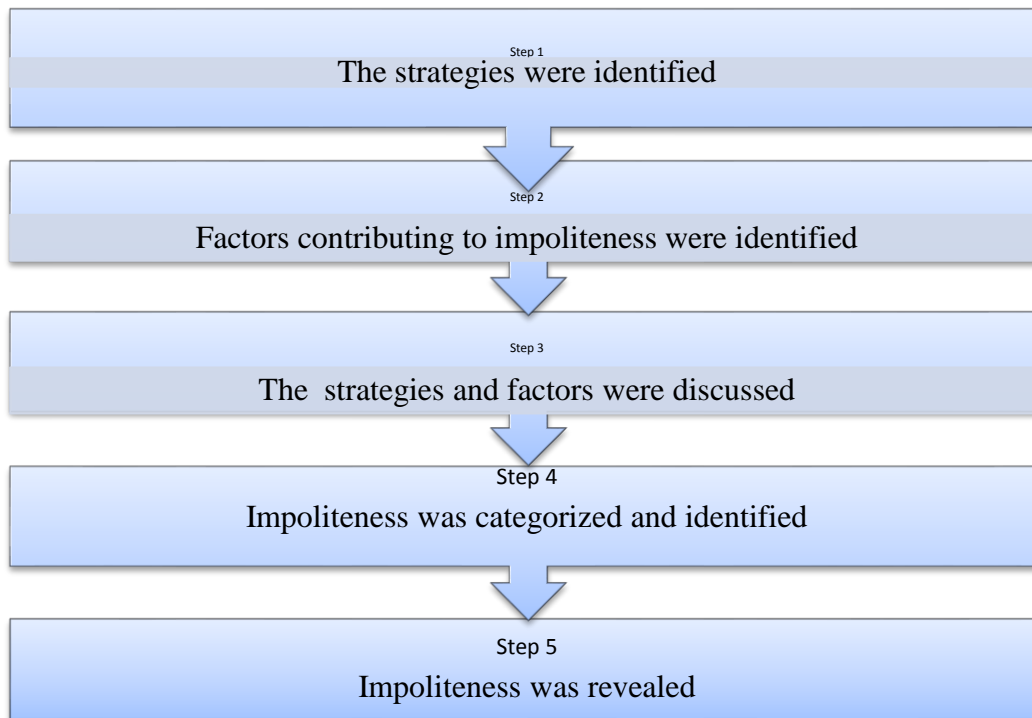


Figure 3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

### 3.5 Methodological advantages and disadvantages of the dataset

The methodological advantages of using a politicians' Facebook page that received an overwhelming response from the participants are; first and foremost, active and interesting discussions among the Facebookers in such pages could be obtained. Secondly, most of the statuses are assumed as controversial. Hence, an impolite-rich data is expected to be able to be collected. Last but not least, naturally occurring data was able to be collected since the presence of a researcher is not seen and felt by the commenters when writing their comments, thus it is unlikely for the researchers to face the observer's paradox (Bousfield, 2008). However, the issue here is probably on whether the data is collected ethically. Based on Herring (1996), on the ethic form of research in CMC, it can be said that the study is being

done using a public page in Facebook which can be seen by everybody online. In addition, the participants also know and are aware of their actions in the public online discussions.

It can be said however, that there are also disadvantages of the dataset. The major obstacle in carrying a study in CMC context is the fluidity of the web which makes it difficult for a researcher to collect data. Modifiable text is possible, thus losing its permanence (Jucker, 2003). Besides that, other challenges are the statuses and comments get updated, where comments keep coming even days or months after, and some comments get deleted due to inappropriateness. This means that sometimes researchers are not able to record or collect the ‘most interesting’ comments, and in other cases, could not see the flow of the impolite exchanges due to some missing comments. According to Jucker (2005), some data might have been edited before appearing online, thus making it impossible for the researchers to analyse it. In fact, the researchers might not even realise the missing data unless they can view moderators’ activities online or read comments from furious users whose previous comments were deleted.

### **3.6 Summary**

In this chapter, the research design was clearly described with the aim of collecting data and information required in order to answer two questions formulated. Data was obtained through comments taken from a politician’s page in Facebook. The procedure for data analysis was also discussed. The five steps in analysing the data was clearly outlined. In the next chapter, the analysis of the data and discussion of the analysis will be presented to demonstrate how Facebookers applied impoliteness strategies in their comments in a politician’s Facebook.

## **CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the data and discussion of the analysis on how Facebookers applied impoliteness strategies in their comments in a politician's Facebook. In the following sections, the strategies are categorized according to Culpeper's framework (2011). Analysis and discussion of the data will be presented in two parts based on the two research questions that guided this study;

- 1) What impoliteness strategies are used by the Facebookers?
- 2) What are the factors that contribute to impoliteness in the Facebookers' comments?

The data collected consist of 151 impolite comments which are analysed based on the Culpeper (2011) theoretical framework. These comments are taken from a total of 2364 comments made by Facebookers based on 5 statuses written by a Malaysian politician.

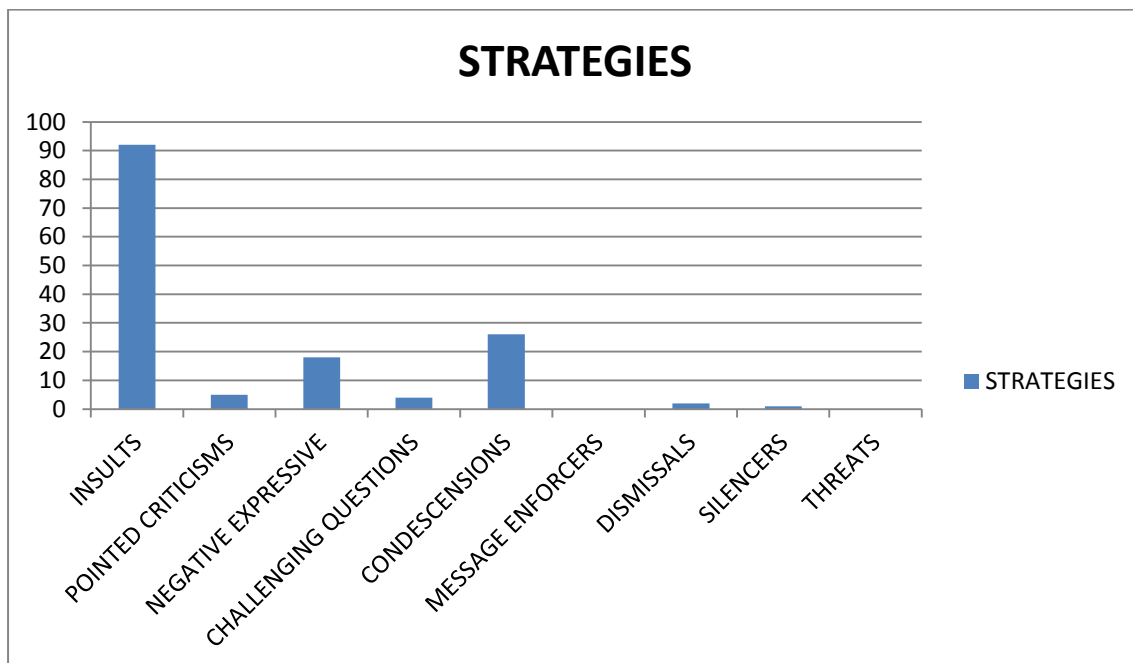


Figure 4.1: Impoliteness Strategies Used By The Facebookers

The graph above shows the impoliteness strategies used by Facebookers in their comments, based on Culpeper's Impoliteness Strategies (2011). It can be seen that insults is the most frequent strategy used by the Facebookers which accounts for 92 comments. The second most common strategy is condescensions strategy which can be found in 26 comments followed by negative expressive with 18 comments. Other strategies like challenging questions, pointed criticisms, dismissals and silencers are found ranging from 1 to 5 comments. However, the other two strategies which are message enforcers and threats cannot be found at all in my data. As a conclusion, it can be said that the most common impoliteness strategy used by the Facebookers in their comments is insults, while message enforcers and threats are the least common.

Based on the analysis, insult has the highest frequency of use compared to other strategies, with the word 'stupid' being the most common word used to insult people. This is similar to a study by Pennanen (2013) who found that the word '*stupid*' is the most common insulting adjective used in CMC. Besides the word 'stupid', the word 'shame' which is not in the list of Culpeper's strategies and formulae, was used widely by Facebookers in my data to show their anger and dissatisfaction towards some issues. At first, I wanted to put it as a new strategy used. However, after consultation with Culpeper himself via email, I decided to put it under condescension strategy, where it is used by the speaker to show superiority towards others. The word did not appear in Pennanen's (2013) study as well. It is interesting to see that Malaysians have their own style of insulting which is different from others. Meanwhile, there were three comments in my data that used gesture to insult which are the words '*pui*' and '*haktuii*'. These two words were used to show the non-verbal act of spitting. According to Culpeper (2011), spitting is considered impolite, however it was not listed in his strategy

as it did not appear regularly in his data. Moreover, it is considered as a non-verbal strategy while Culpeper's data only focused on verbal strategies.

## **4.2 Impoliteness Strategies Used by Facebookers**

There are nine impoliteness strategies according to Culpeper (2011). The first strategy is insults, followed by pointed criticisms/complaints, negative expressive, challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions, condescensions, dismissals, silencers and threats. In this section, I would provide the analysis according to strategies found in the data. The data were taken based on five statuses. Some statuses might have more strategies than others, and there are certain strategies which might not appear at all in certain statuses. Thus, some strategies might have larger extracts of data compared to others. Except for threats strategy which could not be found at all in the data gathered, other strategies are found and discussed in this chapter.

### **Impoliteness Strategy 1: Insult**

This strategy comes from face conceptual orientation (see page 42) and it is used particularly to attack the face (face-attacking). It is divided into four categories which are personalised negative vocatives, personalised negative assertions, personalised negative references and personalised third-person negative references in the hearing of the target. Category 1 includes the use of face attack such as '*you [moron/fuck/shit/bastard/loser/liar]*', category 2 consists of forceful statement without support or evidence such as '*you are [shit, stink, bitch, hypocrite, gay, hopeless]*', category 3 uses reference such as '*your little/stinking mouth/body*' and the last category involves third person in the hearing of the target such as '*she's [nutzo]*'

Table 4.1 Impoliteness strategy 1: Insult

Categories of insult strategy used	Frequency
Category 1 (Personalised negative vocatives)	47
Category 2 (Personalised negative assertions)	12
Category 3 (Personalised negative references)	2
Category 4 (Personalised third-person negative references)	21

From table 4.1, it can be concluded that the most frequent category used in insult strategy is Category 1 which is personalised negative vocative. It can be seen that many Facebookers simply give comments like ‘bastard’ or ‘stupid’ without elaborating it further. This can be categorised as name calling, which is under category 1. This category is widely used perhaps because people just simply want to comment although they do not really know the facts, or maybe because they are too furious to write anything else. This is in line with the concept of morality (Culpeper, 2011) and the definition of impoliteness by Locher and Bousfield (2008) who summarized it as a behaviour that is face-aggravating in a particular context.

### **Status 1**

This status was taken from Anwar Ibrahim’s Facebook page dated 27 October 2012. The issue of ‘hudud’ was raised during that time, and Chua Soi Lek gave his comment about that issue in national newspapers. This status was made in response to Chua’s comment.

*“Chua Soi Lek’s remarks on hudud betray his utter contempt of the religion. This brazen attack on Islam is offensive and has hurt the feelings of Muslims. That they were uttered right in front of Najib means also Soi Lek’s disregard of his position as a special guest, let alone as PM. Even more shocking was Najib sitting through the Islam bashing session. Now*



*Najib's complete silence on the matter makes him just as guilty. Shameful and totally indefensible."*

**Comments (Refer to Appendix A)**

Comment no. 7 : **hopeless** Najib

Comment no. 23 : Nuar pun dua kali lima. Buat benda homoseks dalam privasi tak boleh dikira kesalahan. Statement ketua **Gay**. (Nuar is no better. Practising homosexual in privacy is not considered wrong. A gay leader statement.)

Comment 25 : **no balls**

Comment no.185 : and Najib was there without saying a word, how **pathetic**.it shows how weak this Pm is ...

It can be seen in the first status, the word 'hopeless' is used towards the Prime Minister of Malaysia; Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and this is of course considered insulting due to his respectable post as the Prime Minister. Meanwhile, in comment no.23, the word 'gay' is used towards Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim, a politician. This is considered impolite as the gay culture is something unusual and unacceptable in Malaysian culture and norm. It can be categorized as 'taboo' among Malaysians. Next, 'no balls' is clearly insulting as it portrays the Prime Minister as weak and unmanly, just like gay. The last insulting word used is 'pathetic' and this is said to the Prime Minister as well. This word basically has the same meaning with hopeless. Thus, it is categorized as insult since the position of Prime Minister is a high

ranking post and should be respected. It can be summarised that strategies used for comment number 7, 23 and 185 are from the last category which involved third person in the hearing and not direct. While for comment number 25, it can be said that the first category of insult which is personalised negative vocative is used here as the commenter did not mention any third person as a target.

## **Status 2**

This status was made by Anwar Ibrahim in response to a court case between Anwar Ibrahim and Khairy Jamaluddin where the latter had alleged Anwar as ‘puppet of USA and Israel’ and ‘Malay traitor’ but retracted the statement.

*Court: Khairy Jamaluddin effectively retracted his earlier stmt calling me “puppet of USA and Israel” and “Malay traitor” although transcript of his 2007 speech was presented as evidence*

## **Comments (Refer to Appendix B)**

- Comment no. 10 : “Malay traitor” **pathetic**
- Comment no. 19 : he’s **insane** enough
- Comment no. 34 : Khairy is **a joke**...in fact the whole bee-end is too
- Comment no.83 : KJ **raja (king of) spin**
- Comment no. 142 : Don’t settle out of court ever with those **goons**...
- Comment no. 212 : His **stupid** attachment towards SCOMi till now still like  
**shit..pity my \$\$**

Comment no. 219 : Sue that **assh\*le** upside down!!

Comment no. 248 : Teach the **Bastards** a LESSONS HE WON'T FORGOT

Khairy Jamaluddin is the chief of UMNO Youth, which is the ruling party of the country. In this status, he has retracted his earlier statement where he called Dato Seri Anwar some bad names in the past, although there was proof that he did say it. The commenters use words like *'pathetic, insane, goons, asshole and bastards'* to describe Khairy's actions. This is considered impolite as Khairy is holding the highest post in Umno Youth and is also the Minister of Youth and Sport. In comment no. 212, the words *'stupid'* and *'shit'* are used to describe his connection with one of the prominent oil and gas companies in Malaysia called SCOMI. Based on this status, it can be seen that there are two main strategies used. Firstly, personalized negative vocatives for comments number 10, 142, 219 and 248 which involve name calling, and secondly, personalized third-person negative references for comments number 19, 34 and 83 which involve third person in the hearing of the target, and in this status the third person is Khairy Jamaluddin. It is interesting to see that there is a comment here using personalized negative references which uses reference. This strategy is used in comment number 212 by using the possessive pronoun 'his' as referring to Khairy Jamaluddin.

### **Status 3**

This status was made by Anwar Ibrahim after a controversial video recorded during a forum in one of the local universities went viral. The video became controversial when one of the panellists was seen to insult and bash a student when she was supposed to answer a question from the student.

*“Mahasiswa bukan alat untuk diguna dan diperbodohkan! Salute dengan keberanian menjelaskan fakta ! viva mahasiswa Malaysia!”*

*Translation: University students are not objects to be used or made fool of! Salute with the courage to explain facts! Viva Malaysia university students!*

### **Comments (Refer to Appendix C)**

Comment no 23 : da takut nak jawab (afraid to response)..**noob** giler.(seriously noob).hahaha

Comment no 32 : ayat normal macai..x suka Malaysia kuar dari Malaysia (typical statement from the ‘macai’..go out from Malaysia if you don’t like it)..y (why) macai so **dumbass**

Comment no 39 : wow seriously?! That’s the worst ever explanations i’ve ever seen. Utter **bullshit**.

Comment no. 70 : memang **fuck up** lah...si yg cakap listen22222222 ini i punya forum i cakap u dengar...hak tuuuu, malu kau apabila aku tau si pompuan sundal itu islam (fuck up the one who said listen too many times, a forum of i talk and you listen, embarrassed to know the bitch is a muslim)

Comment no 108 : this Sharifah **brain damage** and not functioning and working, please send her for repairing and reprogramming to “How To Respect Others”...

Comment no.117 : she is **stupid**

Comment no 163 : **go to sleep** sharifah...**you’re drunk**

Comment no 207 : if you are happy with what you have let it be your way, if you're saying don't compare to other countries then i do suggest you stay in amazon, utopia or maybe Libya. **Permanently head damaged.**

Comment no.241 : the most **idiot** student...seolah2 kerajaan potong cukai pintu, cukai pendapatan, dll ni untuk bagi makan "jaws" plak (as if government imposes all the taxes to spoon feed these people)

Comment no. 271 : mindset, worst than a primary school student, so downright  
**stupid.**

Comment no. 273 : aku tengok masa cik student uh cakap. Beria orang tepuk. Bila tang lect cakap support jugak. Hey. Cmon la. Sian student uh.tapi apa2 pun . respect ar. Cik student. Dengan keberanian dia. Lect dia. Sumpah. Very embarrassing. Hello we are not animal. We ar human. Have right. **Stupid!**

Comment no. 280 : what a **pathetic** video.. Malaysia is not a democratic country because there is no freedom of speech there...

Comment no. 314 : she talks about respect but shows none..she even shown disrespect to her fellow panellist when he tried to talk!where is our freedom of speech? Isn't that one of our basic human rights? Well i guess she wouldn't know because she's too busy taking care of animals...why don't you listen to the **shit** you are about to get into

Comment no 324 : What a **BIATCH!!** Such a rude and sarcastic behaviour!!really showed what kind of mentality these BN ppl has. Doing that to a student who is just giving her opinion does not makes her a great but loose respect fm all Malaysians!! She should be sent to Guantanamoo Prison then she will learn what is respect and life, Again what a **Biatch!!SALUTE** to Bavani for being strong!! Its ppl like Bavani we need in this nation!!

Comment no 330 : an **idiot** of BN just spoken below me!!wuakakaka. **moron**!!

Comment no. 340 : if pkr win. Get the **bitch** off. Salute to Bavani.

Comment no. 349 : the mamak is really **shit**

Comment no 353 : salute to BAVANI & all the very best. F\_ \_ \_ \_ to the **idiot**  
lecturer.

Comment no 360 : the year just started and we are already looking at **so many clowns**...

Comment no. 374 : **freakin idiot** lecture. Dah nama macai

Comment no. 432 : sharifah badut tu dh banned dua acc sy. **Looser**!!!

Comment no.458 : this sharifah is a **moron**! A **pathetic** one! She just showed publicly what an uneducated fool she is because no educated person will behave the way she did!

Comment no 496 : listen..listen..listen..animals have problem too..what a **moron**..

Comment no 497 : new **moron** theory will be adding to compulsory subjects, “Discovery Animal Problem”

Comment no 512 : 1stly the audience are behaving like uneducated ppl...when miss bavani talked, they clapped and support..thn when tat **idiot** speaker talked..they clapped n support aso..don't they hv brain to tink n support one side...???? bavani didn'tlk for herself..she was talking on behalf of all the students. Pls la weyh..we can clearly c tat the speaker crapping n try to change the topic...even she didn't let mr Peter to talk bout his opinion...--pls la sharifah...1<sup>st</sup> u try to learn hw to respect n listen when ppl talk..halfway crossing d talk n ask her to stop is nt a decent way...if u dawn student to talk the facts thn jus dun run a program like tis n just **get lost**...!!! i didn't mean to support Bavani bcoz of same

race...but i can say tat those who understand her words will support her anyway...my support  
alwiss for the brave gul, miss bavani

comment no 526 : she is a fish seller from wet market, wat r she doing at uum, she  
should be lecturer for animal...**Fuukking** listen, listen, listen, like cibai

comment no 527 : vote for bawani...N...**Shit** for sharif dah

comment no.535 : **stupid** sharifah tu

comment no 551 : she says don't compare Malaysia with other countries, but she herself  
compare human with animals, what a **stupid** degree holder with low class mentality compare  
with an O Level Bawani. Shame on you Sharifah bodoh....

Comment no 595 : To DSAI and team, while this deserving **Biatch** and her crime  
partners getting hammered from entire nation, please also give a thought on this, how in the  
first place such forum was allowed in a govt university?

comment no 650 :brani2 jugak..tp kna la ad ilmu sikit..ni mintk pendidikn percuma,  
pastu bndingkn dgn ngare lain yg mmg mmu dn prlu atas sbb2 sndiri...bia brani tunjuk  
kecerdikan, bukkn brani tunjukn kebodohn sndiri..dear bawani, kawal la emosi tu..now u look  
like an **idiot** student in front of many people..shame on you

In this status, a lady named Sharifah who is the president of one of the non-government  
organisations in Malaysia was bombarded with impolite words after people watched her  
actions in a video recorded during her talk at one of the universities in Malaysia. The way she  
treated a student who stood up to ask a question had caused Malaysians to condemn her  
responses. Some even used name-calling like '*biatch*'. As for the word '*biatch*', it is a

common slang for the word 'bitch' which is also an impolite word. These comments are considered impolite as she is holding a high post in a non-government organisation. Most of the Facebookers in their comments here used personalized negative references which involved third person in the hearing of the target. In this case, the person is Sharifah. This can be seen in comments number 108, 117, 340, 374, 535, 551 and 595. Besides that, another category that was used widely by the Facebookers is category 1 which is personalised negative vocative. This can be observed from comments number 23, 32, 39, 70, 207, 280, 314, 324, 330, 360, 432, 496, 497, 526, 527 and 650. Meanwhile, there are two comments that used insult strategy from category 2 (negative assertions) which are comments number 349 and 458.

#### **Status 4**

This status was made by Anwar Ibrahim in response to the detention of Australian senator, Nick Xenophon at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport. The detention was believed to stop him from meddling in Malaysia's politic affairs.

*"I condemn in the strongest terms the detention of Australian senator Nick Xenophon at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport.*

*I would like to remind Prime Minister Najib Razak that he has no right to treat visitors as enemies of the state merely because they are critical of his UMNO led administration.*

*Malaysia does not belong to UMNO. It belongs to all Malaysians regardless of political affiliation.*

*While it is true that Senator Xenophon has raised concerns about the probity of our coming general elections, he has neither violated any written law nor conducted himself in a manner which may be constituted as a threat to our security. Furthermore, he is here to be joined*



*later by other Australian lawmakers for talks with us as well as officials of the Election Commission. These reasons cannot be grounds to black list him.*

*This act of detention and proposed deportation for partisan political reason is therefore a gross abuse of power. It is also clearly a violation of international protocol in the treatment of visiting law makers from abroad, particularly from member countries of the Commonwealth. Senator Xenophon must be released immediately and allowed to enter the country without further hindrance.”*

### **Comments (Refer to Appendix D)**

Comment no 30 : Reform the **fucking** government please ANWAR

Comment no 66 : sedangkan orang Malaysia sendiri boleh kena ban masuk

Sarawak inikan orang..(even Malaysians are banned from entering Sarawak).what a **stupid** government

Comment no 73 : Mr.Anu..if u are the good leader for Malaysia, why r u

supporting ‘foreign lawmaker’ here. Yourself never respect

Malaysia!!Obviously, u are betrayer of Malaysian nation!!!

Sikit2 panggil orang asing campur tangan hal ehwal Negara.

Tolong jadi lelaki n pemimpin sejati tanpa bantuan Negara

luar!!! (Always ask outsiders to meddle with local matters.

Please be a man and real leader without other country’s help!!!)

**Stupid** ever!!!

Comment no 74 : Foreign VIP detained while PATIs get the Mykads! Greaatttt. This is really bad for tourism msia actually. **Stupid** be end.

Comment no 84 : don't u hv anything constructive ideas for the country rather condemning mr anwar? What a negative minded **gay** u are

Comment no 88 : RL **stupid**.

Comment no 103 : this is **stupid**...

Comment no 118 : ...**shit** gov!!!

Comment no 128 :**stupid** BN! Tukar.

Comment no 151 : my comments deleted? Freedom of speech it seems...**hypocrites**

Comment no 182 : **stupid** Zi La, he is the opposition leader of Malaysia (FOR NOW). So he has every right to voice out whatever he things appropriate and might smear the country's name. Oppssiiee...our country's reputation has already smeared ages ago due to incompetency of the current ruling government...word of advice, please don't make yourself look **bloody stupid** OK.

Comment no 199 : Zi La, learn some **fucking** English before you try to **shit** out of your **fucking** mouth!La!!!! Datuk i apologize for the vulgarity.

Comment no 200 : Yes agreed with Elanie- **stupid** Zi La!

Comment no 202 : DSAI is a well educated man, he knows what he is talking, not like bn macai's talking bullshit and give people total **shit**!

Comment no 214 : Oh Malaysia if BN continue to b the ruling party n run by ruthless, corrupted, racist, authoritative, **STUPID** (like Zi La) here etc etc etc...too many adjectives

here, the country will be in great great trouble and it is the rakyat who suffers and not the ones who know who will be prosperous

Comment no 286 : DUMNO is damn scared. **Stupid** fools.

Comment no 292 : **idiot fuck!**

Comment no 377 : just look at how much **shit** our ruling party leaders have in this country..

Comment no 391 : this is a BIG blow to the Malaysian & very shameful on their **stupid** act.

Comment no 529 : he is a **gay**, but Anwar is a bisexual

Comment no 749 : i also sternly condemn...its ruined our relationship...what a **stupid** Hishamuddin..

Comment no 810 : **stupid** Malaysia ideal...custom????

Comment no 843 : OH daw..???Aust are fuckwits...more money goes to them than Us FFS..!!! from the Red **Bitch**...!!!

Comment no. 849 : Najib is ruthless!!!& the government is **bullshit**!!!!

Comment no 891 : anwar yang suka memecah belahkan orang..pi mampuih.(Anwar who likes to disunite people. Go to hell).**shit!!** so freaking annoying!!!

In this status, there are mixed responses from the Facebookers. Some are supporting the status while others opposing. The supporters commented using harsh and impolite words

towards the Malaysian government, while those who disagree with the status commented using impolite words to Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim who is the owner of the status. The words highlighted in the extract are considered impolite as they are posed towards Malaysian government and also Dato Seri Anwar who is a high-profile person. In this status, based on frequency count, it is clear that the most commonly insulting word used is the word ‘stupid’ as it had appeared thirteen times in this status. Based on this status, it can be seen that all categories of insult strategy are used. The first strategy which is personalized negative vocatives can be seen in comments number 73, 88, 151, 182, 199, 202, 214, 286, 292, 377, 843 and 891. Only comments number 84, 103, 529 and 849 are from personalized negative assertions while insult strategy using personalized third-person negative references in the hearing of the target can be seen in comments number 30, 66, 74, 118, 128, 182, 200, 749 and 810. The one and only comment using personalized negative references can be observed in comment number 391 using the word ‘their’ as reference.

### **Status 5**

This status was made by Anwar Ibrahim in response to a statement that he claimed was made by UMNO admitting that they fly-in voters for General Election Day.

*Read this. And you will know why you need to go back to vote! – DTF*

*UMNO: “Yes, we fly-in voters; EC: So what?”*

*en.harakahdaily.net*

*“May 3: Amid the shocking revelation that tens of thousands of dubious voters were*

*being flown in by chartered flights from East Malaysia to the Peninsular in time for Sunday's polls, both UMNO and the election commission have defended the act."*

**Comments (Refer to Appendix E)**

Comment no.54 : FUC? u EC..The worst ECin this world...Our tax money are spending like **shit**..Who give BN/UMNO authority to spend people's money...In Malaysia History this I the WORST corrupted GE13..

Comment no 62 : **Bastard**

Comment no. 67 : **Stupid asshole**..u called these people are coming back to vote...nah..

Comment no 79 : this is so **stupid**, i watched this in news today

Comment no. 84 : the true has been blended and twisted. We are asking are these voters Malaysian??? Or simply non-Malaysian with Malaysian IC, u **assholes!!**

Comment no 87 : BN supporters should be so proud now..proud to be **cowards!!!!**

Comment no 90 : EC chairman & deputy chairman are UMNO supporters. What can we expect from them. They are no 1 **culprits**

Comment no 91 : i hate this SPR **scumbag**

Comment no.93 : God willing if we win, can we shaft **bastards** like this to the slammer..for life!

Comment no 95 : please make sure that these **idiots** masquerading as Election Commissioners answer for their treasonable crimes when you are in Putrajaya!

Comment no 101 : Arrogant **bastard**, UBAH those bastard

Comment no. 104 : **fuck!**

- Comment no 115 : Lock up this “**Dog**”!
- Comment no. 121 : Defending Putrajaya at all cost? What a bunch of shameless **morons**?
- Comment no. 123 : What on earth is happening to BN? Treat us as we are **stupid**
- Comment no. 126 : this guy is **insane**
- Comment no 140 : no more bumiputra, bangle nation!!!**Shit!**
- Comment no 168 : **cowards**
- Comment no 171 : **sick** guy
- Comment no 198 : **Damn** Mother F\$&%\*\*KER
- comment no. 205 : real and truly **bastard** politician...they are out of control and mind
- Comment no 210 : **bullshit** la..BN not steady!!!
- comment no. 214 : so bringing in foreigners is a part of their contribution..DONT  
TALK **SHIT**, SEE, DON’T TALK **SHIT**. IIIIIIII REPEAT,  
DON’T TALK **SHIT**.
- Comment no. 233 : Ruby vo, you’re Malaysia is under Mahathir **fucker**. You **bitch**.

This status has made many commenters used harsh words to show their disapproval towards so-called ‘phantom voters’ or voters that are brought from outside of the country. The words in bold are considered impolite as they are posed towards Malaysia Election Commissioner and the government. Based on the comments for Status 5, it can be clearly seen that the majority of insult strategy used here are from category 1 which is personalised negative

vocative. This is revealed in comments number 54, 62, 67, 84,87, 93, 101, 104, 115, 121, 140,168,198, 210, 214 and 233. Only four comments used strategy from category 2 (comments number 79, 90, 123 and 126) while category 4 can be seen in comments number 91, 95, 171 and 204.

### **Impoliteness Strategy 2 : Pointed Criticisms/Complaints**

This strategy uses criticisms or complaints to show dissatisfactions towards the target or the target's actions. Examples of this strategy are: "*this[is/was][absolutely/extraordinarily/etc] [bad/rubbish/crap/horrible/terrible/etc].*"

### **Status 2 (Refer to appendix B)**

Comment no. 105 : khairy jamaludin talking **rubbish**...no fact...

### **Status 3 (Refer to appendix C)**

comment no 158 : **what kind of crap is this!** Really pity our Malaysian university students

comment no 236 : **i've no idea wat rubbish that lady is talking**..empty vessel

### **Status 4 (Refer to appendix D)**

Comment no 29 : **oh crap...UMNO = =**

Comment no 733 : bro Ricky Eu, **i do not need all these craps** because i believe in my religion...

In status 2,3 and 4 above, we can see pointed criticisms are posed towards three different receivers. In the first status, '*rubbish*' is used to criticise what Khairy Jamaludin has said. This is considered impolite as the commenter is belittling Khairy Jamaludin, a respectable minister and chief of Umno Youth, the ruling party. Meanwhile, in the second status, the commenter is belittling Syarifah, the speaker who is also the chief of one of non-governmental organisation (NGO) as if what she has been saying is too silly to be understood. In the last status, it can be seen that the word '*crap*' is used to criticise UMNO and a commenter named Ricky Eu. Umno is the ruling party of Malaysia for more than 50 years, thus it is considered impolite to criticise using this word.

As for comment 733, the commenter is responding to a person named Ricky Eu who talked about an issue related to the commenter's religion. This is considered impolite as he is trying to brush off the argument by defining it as *crap*. It is not surprising to see this kind of response from the commenter no 733 as stated by Bousfield (2006) that the speakers who deliver impoliteness have previously being provoked to some extent. The commenter was angry with Ricky Eu's previous comment about his religion. In a multi-racial country like Malaysia, religion is a sensitive issue (Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, 2011). This leads the commenter to deliver impoliteness due to the provocation by Ricky Eu.

### **Impoliteness Strategy 3: Negatives expressive ( eg.curses, ill-wishes)**

This strategy uses curses or ill-wishes towards the target to show anger or dissatisfactions. For example, phrases like [*go to hell/ hang yourself/fuck yourself*], or [*damn/fuck*] [*yo*

### **Status 1 (Refer to Appendix A)**



Comment no 40 : **go to hell** MCA

Comment 268 : **Fuck** Soi Lek la, eat our money already, go call prostitute now

wanna make what comment also useless A fucking ugly short

apek using your money and mine to call prostitute. Cibai.

The first comment is impolite as the phrase '*go to hell*' is used to curse MCA, a political party which is also under the same coalition with UMNO, the country's ruling party. The second comment is considered impolite as it contains the four-letter-word; '*fuck*' used to curse Chua Soi Lek who is the President of MCA. Chua Soi Lek was also a minister before he resigned due to a scandal.

### **Status 2 ( Refer to appendix B)**

Comment no.70 : Ask for the transcript shove it down Khairy's throat. **Let him eat his words, literally.**

Comment no. 128 : **fuck**Anwar

In status 2, the commenter made an ill-wish to let Khairy swallow the transcript as he denied what he has said before and changed his statement. In the second comment, the word '*fuck*' is used to curse Dato'Seri Anwar Ibrahim. This word is considered very impolite in Malaysian community and is not supposed to be used towards any person, especially a person who used to be Malaysia's deputy prime minister and hold 'Dato' Seri' title. In Malaysia, the title 'Dato'Seri' is a very honourable title. The royals will only award this title to people who have

contributed good deeds to the country. Thus, it is impolite to use such a word to a person who holds the high rank title like Dato' Seri Anwar.

### **Status 3 (Refer to Appendix C)**

Comment no. 368 : Anwar Ibrahim..my daughters studing in all Malaysia's

universities now...**FUCK u** too

This commenter also used '*fuck*' as a way of cursing Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim which is considered very impolite as the intention is to damage one's public reputation and make the hearer lose his face (Culpeper,2011)

### **Status 4 (Refer to Appendix D)**

Comment no 51 : **Fuck najis**

Comment no 99 : kerajaan UBN pimpinan najib..are you ready to **hell**...?

Comment no 136 : **Fuck bn...**

Comment no 306 : **fuck u!**

Comment no 353 : **Fuck stupid Najis**. It's an international disgrace to Malaysia

Comment no 679 : umngok **go to hell**

Comment no 884 : **fuck ko la nuar**

For this status, comment no. 51 and 353 were dedicated to Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato Seri Najib Tun Razak. These are considered very impolite as he is a respectable man who is holding the highest post in the government. Meanwhile, comment no. 99,136 and 679 were directed towards the party that ruled the country. We can see the word ‘*hell*’ is used here, which is very impolite as the commenters are cursing the party. The other two comments, no 306 and 884 were directed towards Dato’ Seri Anwar Ibrahim himself, the status writer. In social norms as mentioned by Culpeper (2011), it is considered impolite to use such words, thus these actions violate social norms in the Malaysian culture.

#### **Status 5 (Refer to appendix E)**

Comment no.16 : Lawless! Judgment day will come and when u r in **hell**, u will burn for Eternity!Enjoy! Good thing is all your friends will be there

Comment no. 29 : May God WRATH be upon them

Comment no.30 : **Fuck you!** Umno dog!

Comment no 56 : how can this leader talk like that..shame to the world..(umno, good bye and **go to hell**)

Comment no 147 : **go to hell**

Comment no 155 : **fuck you...**

From this status, we can see the similar impolite words used to curse and make ill-wishes just like the previous status. Words like ‘*go to hell*’ and ‘*fuck you*’ are used to attack the country’s ruling party, UMNO. Comment no 29 wished that God will be very outraged or angry with

the UMNO members. These are considered impolite as Malaysians are normally polite in daily life and praying for bad things for others are considered bad or rude. This is in line with a study by Kadar & Mills (2011) who stated that people in East Asian cultures are indirect, deferential and extremely polite in the way they communicate.

#### **Impoliteness Strategy 4 : Challenging or Unpalatable Questions**

This strategy is slightly different from other strategies as the speaker uses questions to attack the target. Examples of questions are like '*why do you make my life impossible?*', '*which lie are you telling me?*' and '*you want to argue with me or you want to go to jail?*'

#### **Status 3 (Refer to Appendix C)**

Comment no 262 : **who the tuut** is that woman..she forgot that there are future voters in front of her

This challenging question is posed towards the speaker who was so arrogant in responding to a student's question. The commenter already knows who was the speaker and this question is just to downgrade her.

#### **Status 4 (Refer to Appendix D)**

Comment no 209 : zi la..najib=MP cum PM, anwar Ibrahim=MP cum LEADER OF  
OPPOSITION...**who the fucking hell are u to warn him...**

Comment no 213 : Zi La, **who the hell are you?**

In these comments, challenging questions are posed towards a person named Zi La who commented by warning Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim that he should not interfere in government's decision as he is not in the position to do so. These two commenters were furious and challenged Zi-La back, as they think she is not in the right capacity to warn Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim. This action concurs with findings by Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson (1987) who stated that a threat would lead to a reciprocal counter-threat. This is also mentioned by Culpeper (2011) when he explained the concept of morality.

### **Status 5 (Refer to appendix E)**

Comment no 40 : ohh boy, using rakyat's money to fly immigrants in..what type of  
Govt is this...

This comment is obviously belittling the government of Malaysia as the commenter asked a challenging question; *what type of government is this*

### **Impoliteness Strategy 5 :Condescension**

This strategy is quite similar with insult. It is used to show superiority. Not much explanation from Culpeper's data himself. The only example given (taken from Culpeper's strategy) is *[that] ['s/is being] [babyish/childish/etc]*

### **Status 1 (Refer to appendix A)**

Comment no. 21 :just work and show us the result. There is no point for the MCA

or you guys bashing each other..those action is **childish!**

The commenter was saying that MCA, a Chinese party which is also a part of the country's ruling party is childish. This is considered an insult as the party is an established party and some of the members are even ministers.

### **The use of shame/shame on you as condescension strategy**

Data below shows the use of *shame/shame on you* as the impoliteness strategy to condescend others. It is interesting to see how Malaysians love to say '*shame on you*' to condescend or show superiority towards others. These statements are considered impolite as they are directed toward the government of Malaysia and some political leaders. Unlike Culpeper's data, the phrase 'shame on you' has appeared regularly in my data, which could also show that Malaysians have their own way of showing superiority towards others.

### **Status 1 (refer to Appendix A)**

Comment 102 : **Shame on** PM and Chua Soi Lek for using race and religion for their political survivor.

Comment 129 :**shame shame more shame** on you Anuar

Comment 227: Current regime is desperate for votes and they are willing to sacrifice anything at All to win the PRU13..**shame on them...**

Comment 277 : **Shameful to you** Dato Seri

Comment 292 : **Shame on you** Soi Lek..

Comment no 332: **shame of you** ShameShari

### **Status 3 (Refer to Appendix C)**

Comment no 346 : sharifah zohra jabeen you know wht..**shame on you**~!!!

Comment no 361 : ...**shame on you** students!

Comment no 542 : How can she compare human right with animal right? **Shame on u**  
sharifah

comment no 551 : she says don't compare Malaysia with other countries, but she herself  
compare human with animals, what a stupid degree holder with low class mentality compare  
with an O Level Bawani. **Shame on you** Sharifah bodoh....

comment no 650 :brani2 jugak..tp kna la ad ilmu sikit..ni mintk pendidikn percuma,  
pastu bndingkn dgn ngare lain yg mmg mmu dn prlu atas sbb2 sndiri...bia brani tunjuk  
kecerdikan, bukn brani tunjukn kebodohn sndiri..dear bawani, kawal la emosi tu..now u look  
like an idiot student in front of many people..**shame on you**

### **Status 4 (Refer to Appendix D)**

Comment no 15 : Another **shame** to Msian

Comment no 37 : the BN clearly play by their own rule which is **shame** to the people

Comment no 64 : **Shame** on Malaysia. We must get rid of this corrupt regime this GE13!!!

Comment no 186 : What a **shameful barbaric** behaviour and once again proven to be in such obvious existence in this damn rotten country that is led by idiots and bigots

Comment no 218 : **shameful** indeed for the bn government to act in such a authoritarian manner...!!

Comment no 294 : it only further erode the corrupted b-end image globally. **Shameful** n bad governance!!!

Comment no 312 : so **shameful**

Comment no 544 : **shame on all of you** who have such horrible thoughts on anwar.

Comment no 550 : why are so obsessed about anwar's sexuality anyway? Can you not think clean thoughts of anything else? **Shame shame**

Comment no 591 : hahahahaa..nobody can answer my simple Q? **Very shame the people of Anwar...**

Comment no 612 : you bet this kangaroo is totally fake. He is paid by tax payers to help Australia. What business does he have here . **shame on** the KANGAROO .and **more shame on** Anwar always making Malaysia look terrible in the international scene. He is the only politician that ALWAYS belittles Malaysia internationally. You must NEVER RUBBISH YOUR COUNTRY and nobody else does this despicable act. **Shame on anwar.**

Comment no 768 : **shame on you man...**

**Status 5 (Refer to appendix E)**



Comment no 9: **SHAMEFUL**..please get this out to the whole world..

Comment no 100 : **shameful** not fit to represent Malaysians

Comment no 137 : **shame on you!!!!**

Comment no 149 : very dirty..**shame on u...**

### **Impoliteness Strategy 6 : Dismissal**

Dismissal strategy is used to make the receiver shun from the conversation or argument by dismissing them impolitely. Examples from Culpeper's data are '*go away*', '*get [lost/out]* and '*fuck/piss/shove [off]*'

### **Status 1 (Refer to appendix A)**

Comment no 175 :MCA u r finished. Better **get lost** forever and ever.

In this status, the comment was directed towards MCA, a party for the Chinese which is the second biggest majority in Malaysia. It is considered rude to dismiss the party in this way as it is one of the main parties and also part of ruling party.

### **Status 4 (Refer to Appendix D)**

Comment no 235 : **Fuck off u** gremlin green. Pls finish or read a full sentence speech by anwar. Don't cut partially and make it look bullshit to all.

The commenter was dismissing previous commenter who commented on the status. It is rude to dismiss other commenters this way as everybody is entitled to his own opinion in a social network like Facebook and the previous commenter was just voicing his opinion. This is in line with the concept of face mentioned by Culpeper (2011) where this kind of response meant to damage one's public image.

### **Impoliteness Strategy 7: Silencers**

Silencers is similar to dismissals but it is specifically used to make someone shut their mouth or stop speaking. For example; *[shut] [it/your mouth, face/etc]*, *[shut] [the fuck] up*

### **Status 1 (Refer to appendix A)**

Comment no. 204 :Apis lim tak ikut perkembangan politik..better **fucking shut up**  
then u talking bullshit..

This comment was a response to a previous comment made by Apis lim. This is considered an insult as the previous person only voiced his opinion and in Facebook, everybody is free to give their opinion as long as they do not touch religion, hatred or racial issues. This response also meant as face-attack to damage one's public image, resulting in emotional upset. Goffman (1967) defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes"(p.5). Thus, the damage on one's public image will lead to emotional sadness (Culpeper, 2011).

### **Other Impoliteness strategies found in the data: Gesture-Verbal**

From 151 comments that contain impoliteness, 148 comments contain strategies that are similar to Culpeper's Impoliteness Strategies (2011). However, there are three comments that contain an impoliteness strategy which are not categorized under Culpeper's strategies. Nevertheless, he did discuss this in his book, *Impoliteness : Using Language To Cause Offence*, where he listed down some gestural emblems that were considered impolite but rarely occurred in his data such as spitting, sticking one's tongue at somebody, giving someone a two fingered(or a one fingered)gesture, rolling one's eyes, leering and turning one's back on someone. He said that these might be considered conventionalised non-verbal visual impoliteness behaviours.

### **Status 1 (Refer to appendix A)**

Comment 15 : hidup MCA **pui** (spitting)

### **Status 3 (Refer to Appendix C)**

Comment no. 70 : memang fuck up lah...si yg cakap listen22222222 ini i punya forum i cakap u dengar...**hak tuuiii**, malu kau apabila aku tau si pompuan sundal itu islam (fuck up the one who said listen too many times, a forum of i talk and you listen, haktuii (spitting)embarrassed to know the bitch is a muslim)

### **Status 5 (Refer to appendix E)**

Comment no 41 : dirtiest election, **pui..**

Culpeper said that some impolite or vulgar words were not listed as they did not appear regularly in his data (Culpeper, 2011). He also mentioned that there are gestures that are considered rude such as spitting. This appears in comment no 15 in Status 1, comment no 70 in status 3 and comment no 41 in status 5, where the words 'pui' and 'haktuii' are used to show the action of spitting. However, Culpeper did not categorise this gesture in his impoliteness formulae as he only focused on verbal impoliteness. Thus, this finding is categorized as gesture-verbal strategy in my study.

### **4.3 Factors that trigger Impoliteness in the Facebook comments**

This section is to answer the second research question in my study which is factors that contribute to impoliteness in the Facebook comments. There are three significant factors that trigger impoliteness in the data that I have collected. These three factors have been chosen on the basis that they have appeared in previous studies (Bauer, 2008; Jucker, 2000; Kienpointner, 2008; McKenna and Bargh, 2000; Postmes, Spears & Lea, 1998). Hence, I would like to see whether these factors also appear in my study. Since my data is taken from Facebook which is part of CMC, it cannot be denied that anonymity is one of the main causes of impolite comments, followed by lack of non-verbal cues and emotion. Therefore I will discuss these three factors and how they could lead to impoliteness in my data.

#### **4.3.1 Anonymity**

Firstly, anonymity is one of the factors that triggers impoliteness in CMC (see Postmes, Spears & Lea, 1998). According to them, anonymity in CMC makes people feel that they have more freedom in giving different opinions unlike face-to-face communication which rarely allows them to do so. This is because people are more likely to be impolite when their

identities can be hidden from others. In the data that I have collected, it can be clearly seen that the participants have used impolite words not only when they argue among themselves, but also towards high ranking people and even the Prime Minister. This is unlikely to happen if they are seeing each other face to face as they will know each others' identities. Haslam et.al (1998) stated that disagreement between groups, however becomes more pronounced in anonymous than in non-anonymous discussions. This can be justified by looking at open group discussions and discussions among friends. An open group discussion is where anybody can join the group, for example, the politician's page. On the other hand, discussion among friends is the one you have with a group of friends who request to be your friend and you know their identities. In open group discussion where the identities are anonymous, people use more impolite words. Whereas, in discussion among circle of friends, the participants will try to use more appropriate words even if they disagree with each other, and they are also quick to find agreement compared to anonymous group discussion. Moreover, anonymity increases the risk of intergroup conflict (Postmes et al., 2002). This is similar to Postmes et al. (1998) and others who have theorized that anonymity in CMC results in conformity, anti-social online behavior, and other de-individuating effects (Postmes, Spears, Sakhel, & de Groot, 2001; Valacich, Dennis, & Nunamaker, 1992; Wallace,1999).

Anonymity also causes people to feel less identifiable thus, fear the consequences of their actions less (Reicher and Levine, 1994). This in turn cannot only lead to uninhibited presentations of the actual self but also to strategic and unrealistic presentations of the self. (Walther, 1996). According to Kessel (2011), online users have less risk of 'losing their face' since they can always hide their true identity due to anonymity in CMC. Even though Facebook users need to register in order to use it, a fake user name or account can always be created as they only need to have a valid email account in order to register. From my data,

this is a common scenario as various fake names can be seen such as Inspektor Shahab, Keris Mas Sejati, Gremlin Grey and Zi La. Even though at the same time many decent names can be seen, in fact there were more real sounding names than fake user names which could probably mean their accounts are genuine. This cannot be justified as they make their accounts private that makes them remain anonymous.

Bauer (2008) reported a growing number of users whom he called “the anonymous mob” who wrote impolite comments on online newspapers (cited from Neurater- Kessels, 2011, p.196). He pointed that the privilege of being anonymous is the reason behind this. This reveals the influence of anonymity on the communication behaviour of users. This has led some newspapers in Swiss, for instance, to amend the participation rules. They do not accept pseudonyms anymore and participators are required to give their real names. However, users can still create real-sounding names rather than giving their actual names. Similar situation applies to Facebook as well, as the names look real but the possibility of fake accounts cannot be denied. As I had mentioned earlier, based on my data, there were more real-sounding names than pseudonyms, nevertheless the possibility of fake accounts cannot be ignored as the Facebookers make their account private. Thus, their identities still remain anonymous.

Jucker (2000) discussed a similar case for radio phone-in settings. During a phone-in show, moderators and participants would also have the potential to lose their public reputation. Despite the impression that phone-in participants can protect themselves in the cover of anonymity, the fact is they are not protected as much as online users. Tannen (1998, p.239) explained that “telephone lines can be traced and voices recognized. However, internet protects anonymity by homogenizing all messages into identical appearing print and makes it almost impossible to trace messages back to the computer that sends them.” In brief, owning

to anonymity, internet users do not feel responsible for their behaviour and hence do not worry of the potential of losing their face in public. This is similar to the data that I have collected, where in status 4, a person named Zi La gave a contrast opinion from others and he/she became a target of impoliteness from other participants. Zi La replied but after everybody condemning him/her, he/she just removed all of his/her comments. This shows that internet users do not feel responsible for their actions and do not mind to embarrass themselves as they know they can always remain anonymous and delete what they did earlier without being traced.

#### 4.3.2 Lack of non-verbal cues

Besides anonymity, other related factors such as lack of non-verbal cues and emotion have also contributed to impoliteness. Unlike face-to-face interaction, aspects such as verbal cues, face expression and intonation are missing in CMC context. This has led to a finding by McKenna and Bargh (2000) which stated that a number of psychological research are focusing on the aspects of anonymity and inadequate social cues due to its impact to emotional expression online. The lack of social cues is said to be the key factor to the effects of CMC in social context in comparison to face to face communications, and consequently becomes the basis of several theories about the effects of CMC (Walther & Tidwell, 1995). Related to this, it is clear that in face-to-face communication, non-verbal cue is an important aspect to the realization of politeness. For instance, a rising inflection will indicate questions. Brown and Levinson (1987) also suggested that negative politeness normally comes with a higher voice pitch. Thus, message misinterpretation will probably occur with the absence of non-verbal cues.

According to Collins (1992), non-verbal cues play a decisive role in people's behaviour. Typically, when there are strong non-verbal cues, people are able to focus and control themselves. On the other hand, when the cues are weak, people are likely to become self-centered and can not control their behaviour due to the feeling of anonymity. This is supported by Cottrell, Wacj, Sekerak, & Rittle (1968) who say that due to anonymity, people are not worried if they do not give good impression to others. In fact, knowing that they are anonymous, they might behave extremely and impulsively (Diener, Fraser, Beamon, and Kelem, 1976; Singer, Brush and Lublin, 1965). Besides that, lack of cues in CMC makes it unsuitable for certain task such as when people attempt to discuss complicated meaning of word (Daft & Lengel, 1984). People might interpret something wrongly or differently, and this could trigger bigger issues in Facebook discussion which might lead to sensitive issues like hatred or racism. This is also agreed by Kiesler, Siegel and McGuire (1984) who stated that lack of cues in CMC might also influence how people interpret what they read.

#### 4.3.3 Emotion

The third factor influencing (im)polite behaviour is emotion. First of all, it has to be stressed that the importance of emotions as a factor influencing (im)polite behaviour has been downplayed in standard theories of (im)politeness such as Brown and Levinson (1987). However, Watts (2003) emphasized that besides factors such as power, distance and rank of imposition, the emotional relationship between the interlocutors, too, plays a vital role, to decide the direction of the interaction, either in cooperative or competitive climate. For instance, fear, compassion and anger. Compassion drives people to support altruistic activities that they believe is right, thus contribute to an improvement in a social group, community or culture. Fear makes people cautious in dangerous moments and anger causes us to to fight against violations of justice principle or what we believe is right. On the other



hand, these emotions if applied negatively, can cause disagreement, flaming and trolling and consequently lead to impoliteness, which could be one of the impoliteness factors in my data. Based on my data, it could be seen that the status written by the politician had evoked negative emotions in the readers and caused them to respond impolitely. For example, in status 3 where the status was related to an incident that happened in a university. In the incident, a speaker had responded impolitely towards a student who posed a question. The way the student was being treated had angered many people, thus they showed their emotions in their comments. This is similar to a finding by Kienpointner (2008) who found that certain emotional arguments involving negative emotions such as fear, hate or contempt tend to be formulated in an impolite way. His study concurs with my finding that when people are angry and dissatisfied, they tend to be impolite and use inappropriate words to voice their emotions. In the context of CMC, emotion is expressed differently, which is in written verbal form and this has led to one aspect of emotion communication. According to Sproull and Kiesler (1991) the new social situation created by CMC makes traditional norms (e.g. striving to be polite) and expectations lose their status. Sproull and Kiesler (1991: 49) add that, "Electronic messages are often startlingly blunt, and electronic discussions can escalate rapidly into name calling and epithets, behaviour that computer buffs call *flaming*". Flaming suggests that in CMC actions and decisions may become more extreme and impulsive.

Siegel, Dubrovsky, Kiesler and Mcguire (1986) define flaming as the voicing of strong opinions, accompanied by negative remarks such as insulting, swearing, offending, or giving hostile comments emotionally. The absence of nonverbal cues has anticipated a greater tendency for flaming, and so does anonymity. There is a chance that flaming arises from verbal messages that might not be harsh in face-to-face communication, but turns the other way around due to lack of non-verbal cues. (Morand & Ocker, 2002). As my data is taken

from a politician's status in Facebook, flaming occurs frequently due to different ideologies between the Facebookers and to justify what they believe is right. This can be seen clearly in Status 4 where a person named Zi La made an opposite remark from others (see Comment 173, Status 4). Others have responded negatively to her/his comment. (see Comment 180, 182, 185, 198, 199, 200,205, 209, 213, 214). It is important to note that according to Stromer-Galley (2003), there are two groups of people who usually engage in political conversations online which are the homophily and the diversity groups. The homophily are those who engage in the conversation to reinforce their ideology and to interact with people who have a similar belief. Whereas, the diversity are those who search out for discussants who have different opinions from them and give different opinions as well just to enhance their views on certain issues. This is difficult to prove in my study, however as I saw many comments from different persons in the facebook and there were polite comments although from different viewpoints, I can infer that this group of participants are people who seek different opinions to enhance their views.

It is clear from my data that there are three main factors involved in triggering impoliteness which are anonymity, lack of non-verbal cues and emotion. Based on my observation, these three aspects are very much related to each other and the absence of one factor has led to the occurrence of other factors which then trigger impoliteness.

#### **4.4 Summary**

In this section, I have analysed the different strategies used in a politician's Facebook. Besides that, factors leading to impoliteness were also discussed. From my analysis, the most widely impoliteness strategy used was insult followed by condescension and negative expressive strategies. Additionally, there are three main factors observed in this study which

are anonymity, lack of non-verbal cues and emotion. These three factors are interrelated and contributed much to the presence of impoliteness in the study.

## **CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This study gives an account of impoliteness strategies used in a politician's facebook and the possible reasons for the widespread use of impolite strategies in the comments. Primary data were collected from comments made in English language in a politician's Facebook. As mentioned earlier in the introduction, the objectives of this study were to investigate the impoliteness strategies used by Facebookers in their comments, based on Culpeper's framework and the factors that trigger impolite comments in Facebook.

### **5.2 Findings**

One of the significant findings that emerges from this study is insult which is the most common strategy used compared to other strategies, with the word 'stupid' being the most

common word used to insult. Hence, the outcome of the study is similar to a research done by Penanen (2013) who found that ‘stupid’ was the most common word used to insult people in his study. At the same time, this study showed that the Facebookers did not use all the strategies theorized by Culpeper (2011). Two of Culpeper’s Impoliteness strategies (2011), message enforcers and threats, were not found in this study. On the contrary, there were words that did not appear regularly in Culpeper’s data but emerged frequently in my study such as ‘shame/shame on you’ and ‘puui’ and ‘haktuii’. The phrase “shame/shame on you’ under condescension strategy appeared 29 times, however it rarely appeared in Culpeper’s data. Meanwhile, ‘puui’ and ‘haktuii’, that showed the act of spitting, appeared three times in this study. Spitting is not categorized in Culpeper’s Impoliteness Strategies as it is a non-verbal strategy and does not appear in his data. Thus, in this study, it is categorized as Gesture-Verbal Strategy.

Thus, it can be said that the first objective which is to identify the impoliteness strategies used in a politician’s Facebook is successfully achieved based on these findings.

The second objective intends to identify the factors that contribute to impoliteness. The study shows that, since the study is done in CMC context, the factors are very much connected to the context of CMC itself. This is supported by Herring (2001, p. 621) who mentions that “one characteristic feature, especially of many text-based CMC modes of communication (e.g. blog, emails) is that they are ‘anonymous’ (faceless, bodiless) forms of interaction.” A study by Penanen (2013) finds that anonymity can be a factor for some users that want to evoke conflict, and it is easier to insult third party in an anonymous domain and evoke these conflicts among the supporters of different groups or ideologies. Besides that, emotions such as flaming also play a significant role in triggering impoliteness. This is agreed by Culpeper (2011) who states that emotions are of key importance to impoliteness. There is no solid proof yet to presume that emotions in CMC are missing or complicated to be used in

communication (Morand & Ocker, 2003). In addition, emotions such as flaming could occur due to a lack of non-verbal cues which lead to message misinterpretation. While flaming could occur partly because of lack of non-verbal cues, the basic cause nevertheless comes from anonymity of CMC. Thus, it can be seen that these factors are very much related to each other and are the keys that may lead to impoliteness in Facebook.

### **5.3 Limitations of the Study**

During my study, I faced several obstacles such as the data used was restricted to English medium. Thus, I had to ignore some data which were written in Malay which might also give significance to my study. Besides that, as my study was based on CMC context, I found that some of the data were deleted by the writer or the administrator of the page and it was difficult to trace them back. This also affected the flow of data that I had collected. At the same time, past studies in impoliteness based on Malaysian context is scarce which limit the source of literature that I can review.

### **5.4 Implication and Recommendation for Future Studies**

For future studies, there are a few recommendations. Other researches may want to look at different social networks such as Twitter or Instagram. These two are also new and not many studies on impoliteness have been carried out using these two social networks yet. Besides that, future researchers may also interview the participants to identify their intentions of being impolite. This could give a clearer idea on the factors of impoliteness. The implication of my study is it shows the level of impoliteness people could have when they know they are anonymous. From one point of view, it is good that people are practising their social rights and able to analyse things critically. However, this kind of behaviour may also create chaos if

it is not monitored. It is suggested that the Government should create a platform where people can voice out their opinions correctly and know that they are being listened to. Last but not least, I hope my study is able to have its own contribution in an attempt to fill a twofold research gap; impoliteness and Malaysian-context CMC.

## REFERENCES

- Angouri, J. & Tseliga, T. (2010). You have no idea what you are talking about! From e-disagreement to e-impoliteness in two online forum. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 6 (1), 57–82.
- Bousfield, D. (2008). *Impoliteness in interaction*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, P. & Levinson, S.C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Culpeper, J. (2008). Reflections on impoliteness, relational work and power. In Derek Bousfield & Miriam A. Locher (Eds.), *Impoliteness in language: Studies on its interplay with power in theory and practice* (Language, Power and Social Process 21), 17-44. Berlin: Moyton de Gruyter.
- Culpeper, J. (2011). *Impoliteness: Using language to cause offence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Culpeper, J. (1996). Towards an anatomy of impoliteness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 25(3), 349-367.
- Culpeper, J. (2005). Impoliteness and entertainment in the television quiz show: The weakest link. *Journal of Politeness Research, Language, Behaviour, Culture*,

1(1), 35-72.

Eelen, G. (2001). *A critique of politeness theories*. Manchester: St Jerome Publishing.

Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual: Essays on face-to-face behaviour*. New York: Anchor Books.

Graham, S.L.(2007). Disagreeing to agree: Conflict, (im)politeness and identity in a computer-mediated community. *Journal of Pragmatics*, (39), 742-759.

Haugh, M. (2010). When is an email really offensive? Argumentativity and variability in evaluations of impoliteness. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 6 (1), 7-31.

Harris, S. (2001). Being politically impolite: Extending politeness theory to adversarial political discourse. *Discourse and Society*, 12(4), 451-472.

Herring, S.C. (1996). Linguistic and critical research on computer-mediated communication: Some ethical and scholarly considerations. *The Information Society*, 12(2), 153-168.

Herring, S.C. (2001). *The handbook of discourse analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Herring, S.C. (2007). A faceted classification scheme for computer-mediated discourse. Retrieved from <http://www.languageatinternet.de/articles/2007/761>

Kadar, D.Z. & Mills, S. (2011). *Politeness in East Asia*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kellerman, K. & Reynolds, R. (1990). When ignorance is bliss: The role of motivation to reduce uncertainty in uncertainty reduction theory. *Human Communication Research*.

Kienpointner, M. (2003). Unhöfliche Partikeln? Kompetitive Verwendungen von Partikeln in der Alltagskonversation. In Gudrun Held (ed.), *Partikeln und Höflichkeit*, 73-94. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Kienpointner, M. (2008). Impoliteness and emotional arguments. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 4 (2), 243-265.

Kiesler, S., Siegel J. & McGuire T.W. (1984). Social psychological aspects of computer-mediated communication. *American Psychologist*, 39 (10), 1123-34.

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Simulated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Locher, M.A. & Watts, R.J. (2005). Politeness theory and relational work. *Journal of Politeness Research, Language, Behaviour, Culture*, 1(1), 9-33.

Locher, M.A. (2010). Introduction: Politeness and impoliteness in computer-

- mediated communication. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 6 (1), 1-5.
- Locher, M.A. & Bousfield, D. (2008). Introduction: Impoliteness and power in language. In Derek Bousfield and Miriam A. Locher (Eds.), *Impoliteness in language: Studies on its interplay with power in theory and practice* (Language, Power and Social Process 21), 1-13. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Lorenzo-Dus, N., Blitvich, P.G. & Bou-Franch, P. (2011). On-line polylogues and impoliteness: The case of postings sent in response to the Obama Reggaeton YouTube video. *Journal of Pragmatics*, (43), 2578-2593.
- Mills, S. (2005). Gender and impoliteness. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 1 (2), 263-280.
- Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani & Dian Diana Abdul Hamed Shah. (2011). Freedom of religious expression in Malaysia. *Journal of International Studies*, Volume 7.
- Morand, D.A & Ocker, R.J. (2003). *Politeness theory and computer-mediated communication: A sociolinguistic approach to analyzing relational messages*. Retrieved from <http://esdl.computer.org/comp/proceedings/hicss/2003/1874/01/1874doc.htm>
- Neurauter-Kessels, M. (2011). Im/polite reader responses on British online news sites. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 7(2), 187-214.
- Opp, K. (1982). The evolutionary emergence of norms. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 21, 139-149.
- Postmes, T.R., Spears, R. & Lea, M. (1998). Breaching or building social boundaries: SIDE-effects of computer-mediated communication. *Communication Research*, 25 (6), 689-715.
- Pennanen, S.P. (2013). *The structure of impolite events in computer-mediated conversation* (Pro-Gradu Thesis, University of Helsinki) Retrieved from <https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/38957/thestruc.pdf>
- Siegel, J., Dubrovsky, V., Kiesler, S. & McGuire, T.W. (1986). Group processes in computer-mediated communication. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 37 (2), 157-87.
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (2005). (Im)politeness, face and perceptions of rapport: Unpacking their bases and interrelationships. *Journal of Politeness Research: Language, Behavior and Culture*, 1(1), 95-120.
- Thurlow, C., Lengel, L. & Tomic, A. (2004). *Computer mediated communication*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.



- Upadhyay, S.R. (2010). Identity and impoliteness in computer-mediated reader responses. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 6, 105–127.
- Watts, R.J. (1997). Silence and the acquisition of status in verbal attraction. In *Silence: interdisciplinary perspectives*, A. Jaworski(Ed.), 87-115. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Watts, R.J. (2003). *Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Watts, R.J., Ide, S. & Ehlich, K. (Eds. 1992[2005]). *Politeness in language: Studies in its history, theory and practice*. Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter.

## APPENDIX A:

### STATUS 1

**APPENDIX B:**  
**STATUS 2**

APPENDIX C:  
STATUS 3

APPENDIX D:  
STATUS 4

APPENDIX E:

STATUS 5



## APPENDIX F

## APPENDIX G