

**IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS ON THE  
LOW YAT PLAZA INCIDENT**

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## ABSTRACT

The study investigates impoliteness strategies and the realization of language used by YouTube interlocutors when discussing the Low Yat Plaza incident. On the wake of the brawl at Low Yat Plaza, which shook the nation on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2015, many Malaysians took to social media such as YouTube to express their thoughts on the issue. A small theft incident at the plaza had become a racial frenzy over social media and therefore, it is puzzling how the incident can occur when politeness and respect are the central belief of the Malaysian society. Besides, the study aims to analyse impoliteness strategies used by Malaysians in social media comments that causes social face damage and analyse impoliteness in the language used by Malaysians. The data were drawn from two videos posted in YouTube.com which depicts impolite interactions between interlocutors. Both videos were chosen because it had the most number of impolite comments by YouTube users. Culpeper's (2011) Impoliteness Framework was used to qualitatively analyse 123 comments gathered. Findings of the study show that Malaysians used the strategy of 'insult' most frequently as a form of impolite talk in their respective comments and profanities were the most used linguistic device to cause social face damage to interlocutors. Apart from those strategies propagated by Culpeper (2011), other new categories of insult emerge which illustrates that Culpeper (2011) Impoliteness framework cannot be replicated completely in an Asian setting. The new categories of insult include accusation and baseless claims, show of superiority as well as mock and ridicule.

## **ABSTRAK**

Kajian ini menyiasat strategi ketidak-sopanan and bagaimana ia direalisasikan dalam pertuturan pengguna *YouTube* apabila membincangkan insiden *Low Yat Plaza*. Insiden ini berlaku pada 12 Julai 2015 dan ramai rakyat Malaysia berkongsi pendapat mereka di laman sosial. Insiden ini tercetus kerana kes mencuri kecil yang berlaku di plaza tersebut. Isu ini amat membimbangkan terutama sekali apabila rakyat Malaysia dikenal sebagai rakyat yang bersopan-santun dan berbudi bahasa. Selain itu, kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk menyelidik strategi ketidak-sopanan rakyat Malaysia di komen laman sosial yang menyebabkan ‘*face damage*’ dan untuk menganalisis ketidak-sopanan rakyat Malaysia dalam pilihan cara tutur mereka. Kerangka kerja ketidak-sopanan *Culpeper* (2011) digunakan secara kualitatif untuk menjawab 123 komen yang dikumpul dari laman sosial *YouTube.com* daripada dua video. Video-video ini dipilih kerana ia mengandungi komen-komen yang tidak sopan yang paling tinggi. Hasil penyelidikan ini menunjukkan bahawa rakyat Malaysia menggunakan strategi penghinaan (*insult*) paling kerap berbanding strategi lain dan kata-kata kotor (*profanities*) adalah peranti linguistic (*linguistic device*) yang paling kerap digunakan untuk menyebabkan *face damage*. Didapati bahawa strategi ketidak-sopanan *Culpeper* (2011) tidak mencukupi untuk mengkategorikan kesemua 57 komen penghinaan daripada pengguna *YouTube*. Ini menunjukkan bahawa kerangka kerja *Culpeper* (2011) tidak boleh direplikasi di komuniti Asia. Oleh sebab itu, terdapat tiga kategori penghinaan baru yang diwujudkan iaitu; *accusation and baseless claims*, *show superiority* dan *mock and ridicule*.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background of the Study

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is one of the Internet's exciting new innovations that have gained tremendous popularity especially in the last ten years (Fielder, 2004). Some of the more popular CMC platforms include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and online forums. These platforms encourage people to discuss and exchange their views and opinions on a certain topic. The existence of these virtual communications has become a global phenomenon and with its growing number of users daily, it is undeniably one of the most powerful tools of communication. YouTube for instance, has become a social site in which thousands of videos are being uploaded every day by YouTube account holders for public viewers to watch and comment. As a result, it has become a medium and powerful tool of communication and discussions of any kind. According to Halim (2015), discussions sometimes turn heated and lead to disagreements among its interactants and this is when impoliteness comes in. These discussions can turn heated especially when there is a difference in opinion, ignorance to someone else's point and view and use of impolite language among its interactants. Such Behaviours have or are presumed to cause offense to at least one participant, which has taken the offence.

Before the formation of Malaysia, Malaya was known as *Tanah Melayu*, which means "Malay land", referring to its primary inhabitants before the inclusion of the Chinese and Indians. During the time it was colonized by the British Empire, many immigrants from south China and south India came to *Tanah Melayu* to work as labourers, which ultimately

shaped Malaysia's diverse national identity. To ease administration, the British divided Malaysians according to occupation and geographical location. Thus, the Malays who were mostly farmers, were placed in rural areas, Indians mostly took up being rubber tapers, were placed in rubber estates and plantations while the Chinese were mostly placed in the cities because they were miners and business traders. The administrative stance taken by the British has contributed to the economic and social standings of the many races in Malaysia even today and has largely contributed to the social class system among Malaysians. Generally, the Chinese are regarded as rich and economically more stable as compared to the Indians and the Malays because of their prosperous businesses and other monetary gains. In fact, the Malays are often regarded as more backward or not economically viable people (Mokhtar, 2013) and therefore, the implementation of the 'The New Economic Policy (NEP)' in 1971, which calls for equal and fairer distribution of opportunities for the Malays.

Nevertheless, though divided, Malaysians are generally known to be polite and treat each other with utmost respect. In fact, Malaysians would ensure what they say is politely constructed when chatting with another especially when discussing something of a different belief (Ali, 2000). As such, they will be understood, accepted and be well received by those, whom they are communicating with online. Further, Malaysians give a lot of attention to their daily conversations especially with people whom they are not close with to show respect and to maintain their 'face needs' (Thayalan, 2011). Therefore, it is puzzling how the Low Yat Plaza incident can occur when politeness and respect are the central belief of the Malaysian society.

On the wake of the brawl at Low Yat Plaza, which shook the nation on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2015, many Malaysians took to social media such as YouTube to express their thoughts on the issue. It was reported that, a young Malay man stole a phone from one of the many kiosk at the plaza. When he was caught by a few Chinese storekeepers; he allegedly told them that he was sold a fake phone by one of the Chinese man and that he was the actual victim. What seemed like a case of simple theft blew up into a huge fight among the Malay and Chinese community, each wanting to defend their respective races. Following the fight, there were numerous videos capturing the incident uploaded onto YouTube and with it, impolite comments and reaction from the shocked and angry public.

Many relate the incident to the infamous May 13<sup>th</sup> 1969 racial incident in Malaysia. The true reason that lead to the incident was, the ruling party at that time, United Malays National Organization (UMNO) party dedicated to uphold the aspirations of Malay nationalism, was losing so many of its seats during the 1969 election, that it was on the verge of surrendering the state of Selangor to its opposition, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) which actively campaigned against the privileges of the Malay race. UMNO also very nearly lost the state of Perak to the People's Progressive Party (PPP) of the Seenivasegam brothers. The Malay and Chinese community at large took to the streets in protest defending their respective parties, resulting in numerous deaths and injuries. Comparisons were quickly made between the May 13<sup>th</sup> racial incident and the Low Yat Plaza incident because after 46 years, it again involved the Chinese and Malays, revolting to defend their respective races.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) is created by individuals as an online communication tool but the way politeness strategies or im(politeness) strategies are observed is solely established by the users themselves. According to Thayalan (2011), Malaysian online communicators need to observe and follow certain politeness strategies to foster camaraderie and group solidarity among the various cultures and races. Without these conventions, there would be chaos in the system and heighten the face damage inflicted (Bousfield, 2008).

The “High Moral Values and Staying Polite Campaign” (*Kempen Budi Bahasa Budaya Kita dan Kempen Nilai Murni*) was launched a few years ago by the government to instil courtesy, moral values and politeness among Malaysians. This is one of the many efforts taken by the local government to stop racial incidents such as the May 13<sup>th</sup> incidents from happening again. However, the effectiveness of these campaigns can be questioned with the recent Low Yat Plaza incident when a small episode of theft was blown out of proportion and now has become a racial frenzy. Through initial observation, it can be said that the involvement of various parties such as politicians and social media have added to the fury, making a small issue into a bigger one. Despite all the technological and industrial advancements, politeness and courtesy, once the identity and pride of our nation, have been eroded today.

The traditional politeness theories (Brown & Levinson 1987; Leech 2016), focused more on maintaining peace and harmony in interactions, and have overlooked impoliteness. Specifically, these scholars lean towards the idea that impoliteness is only a consequence of

pragmatic failure or merely atypical Behaviour that is not worthy of consideration (Culpeper, 2011). Additionally, there is a profound gap in literature that addresses issues of impoliteness in online interactions especially when discussing a social issue in the Malaysian setting.

## **1.2 Significance of the Study**

It is important to understand the significance of identifying impoliteness strategies used in the Low Yat Plaza incident to inform the public. This is essential to avoid unnecessary violence, disharmony and racial tension and also ultimately avoiding similar incidents from happening again. Malaysians are said to be a collective group of people who often observe politeness in daily conversations (Barton et al., 2006; Ali, 2000; Guinee, 2005) thus, they should be informed of the importance of communicating using conventions that is well received by the general population. This includes, excluding the usage of taboo words and sensitive topics such as race and religion as this may harm the harmonious balance.

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to investigate Malaysians' communicative antics particularly impoliteness strategies used by Malaysian online community when discussing the Low Yat Plaza incident. There are two specific research objectives that drive this study:

1. To study the conventionalized impoliteness strategies used by Malaysians in social media comments that cause social face damage.
2. To analyze conventional impoliteness in the language used by Malaysians in social media comments.



#### **1.4 Research Question**

There are two research questions that are central to this study. The main purpose of these research questions is to help achieve the objective of this study. The study henceforth strives to answer the following:

1. What are the conventionalized impoliteness strategies used by Malaysians on social media comments that cause social face damage?
2. How is conventionalized impoliteness strategies realized in the language used by Malaysians?

#### **1.5 Scope and Limitations**

This study offers to shed light on the impoliteness strategies by Malaysian social media users when commenting on the Low Yat Plaza incident in YouTube. Since the study only refers to one social incident, the data in this study may not be a total reflection of the language used by Malaysians when discussing other social issues online.

The profiling of the ethnic background or other personal details of the participants may not be provided since they are not readily available in the network site. Participants will also be limited to those who provide comments in the selected incident videos, which serve as the source of data.

Only comments that are impolite in nature are considered and analysed and all other comments are disregarded. In addition, only users that give impolite comments were considered as samples and only these comments are considered as data.

## 1.6 Definition of Key Terms

This section introduces the important terms that are used throughout the study.

*Impoliteness* refers to “Situation in which a speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, and/or the hearer perceives the face-attack as intentional” (Culpeper, 2005, p.38)

*Computer Mediated Communication* refers to “a tool which is used to exchange communication among its interactants via the usage of electronic devices namely computers and mobile phone” (Locher, 2010, p.36)

*Social Network Site* refers to “Medium with certain similarities such as the ability to make friends, share opinions and comments” (Goulet et al., 2011, p.256)

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter addresses and presents a few notions that are related to politeness and impoliteness. This is followed by Malaysian's communicative styles and computer-mediated communication (CMC) and how impoliteness is observed in CMC.

### 2.1 Theories of Politeness

Researchers have been trying to define politeness for decades now. Most of these researchers have developed various models and theories based on linguistic politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Fraser, 1990; Lakoff, 1975; Leech, 2016). The Cooperative Principle (CP) as introduced by Grice (1975) has been the basis for much politeness work and especially Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness. The general rule of the CP is to make "appropriate contributions to conversation only when it is required and by the established purpose of the talk in which one is engaged with". In other words, the CP does not encourage speakers to give unnecessary input towards a conversation. Grice had developed four conversational rules or 'Maxims' comprised by the CP, these include:

- i. Maxims of Quantity
- ii. Maxims of Quality
- iii. Maxims of Relation
- iv. Maxims of Manner

Robin Lakoff (1975, p.64) stated that "politeness is developed by people in order to lessen friction in personal interaction". Leech (2016, p.19) on the other hand, defined politeness as "strategic conflict avoidance" which "can be measured in terms of the degree of effort put into the avoidance of a conflict situation".

To date, the politeness framework by Brown and Levinson (1987) has been one of the most influential as it sparked major interest in this area of research. In addition, it is a significant aspect of discussion on the notion of impoliteness. The theory is built on Goffman's (1967) notion of face, which he defined as "the positive value an individual claim for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (p.5). Each person has a social "face" which is an emotional manifestation, which can be kept, improved or lost.

Brown and Levinson (1987) further worked on this notion of face and categorized it into positive face and negative face. Positive face is defined as the "individuals need to be wanted, acknowledged and appreciated" while negative politeness is the "the individual's desire to be allowed freedom, self-determination and space" (pp.65-67). The theory assumes that most speech acts such as requests, compliments and apologies inherently pose a threat to the hearer's and speaker's face and politeness theory is responsible for resolving those face-threatening acts (FTAs). FTAs are acts that infringe on the hearer's desire to be respected and maintain self-esteem.

Brown and Levinson (1987) established and outlined four types of politeness which are bald on-record strategy, the positive politeness strategy, the negative politeness strategy and off-record strategy. However, Brown and Levinson's attention to the strategies of FTAs and much dependence on Grice's (1975) Cooperative's Principle has been critiqued as overlooking the notion of impoliteness (De Kadt, 1998; Gu, 1990; Lee-Wong, 1999; Locher, 2004; Watts, 2003). Many of these researchers think that, by ignoring the importance of impoliteness, it has made the theory of politeness less comprehensive. Brown

and Levinson's work have also been criticized by the fact that they seemed to assume the interlocutor's face is universally applicable in all cultures across the world.

Culpeper (1996) believes that for a model of politeness to be complete and comprehensive, its counterpart, being impoliteness should also be addressed. It must be noted that because Culpeper's (1996) model of impoliteness is a direct parallel representation of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, the weakness associated with the model is also inherited.

Consequently, this led to the development of impoliteness. In contrast to the traditional views of politeness theory, "post-modern work on im/politeness 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, as cited in Bousfield & Miriam, 2008). Although the use of impoliteness in particular contexts such as army training (Culpeper, 1996) and television series (Culpeper, 2015) is seen as being acceptable, the same Behaviour; nevertheless, may be seen as inappropriate, unacceptable and impolite in other situation. In sum, it is rather a difficult task to identify a universally (im)polite utterance

## **2.2 Understanding Impoliteness**

The notion of impoliteness is very much associated with how a person perceives it. For instance, using offensive language and shouting to an older person is perceived highly impolite. However, if the same Behaviour were to take place during a football match to express disappointment over a goalless match, it would not be viewed as being impolite at all.

After reviewing literature in the field of impoliteness, it is obvious that many researchers have attempted a study in this area. Goffman (1967) and Watts (2003) both refer to impoliteness as “aggressive facework”. Culpeper (2005, p.38) defines impoliteness as a “situation in which a speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, and/or the hearer perceives the face-attack as intentional”. Meanwhile, Mills (2005) stated that perceptions of impoliteness solely rely on the perceived interpretation of an interaction of what is proper and past events that may influence those interpretations.

However, according to Watts (2005) polite, impolite and appropriate Behaviour can be difficult to assess because of its varying interpretation from its interactants. In other words, it is highly unlikely that the speaker and the hearer will have mutual understanding and therefore, will interpret a Behaviour differently, with regards to the degree of impoliteness. Even though Bousfield and Locher (2008) define impoliteness as “face-aggravating” Behaviour in a context; they support Watt’s (2005) point that there is no absolute agreement among researchers on what impoliteness really is. Considering all these definitions, it can be concluded that researchers are constantly contemplating on the precise definition of impoliteness. Nevertheless, Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson’s (1987) contributions to politeness in further understanding impoliteness must be acknowledged. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory has proven to be a beneficial point of reference for theories in impoliteness particularly Culpeper (1996) and Culpeper (2003, 2005). For the study, Culpeper’s (2011) definition of impoliteness will be used as a basis of this study:

Impoliteness is the negative attitude towards specific Behaviour occurring in specific contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires and/or beliefs about

social organization, including, in particular, how one person's or a group's identities are mediated in others in interaction. (Culpeper, 2011, p.23)

Additionally, situated Behaviours are considered impolite and are perceived negatively when they coincide with how “one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they ought to be” (Culpeper 2011, p.23). Although Brown and Levinson (1987) believe that the occurrence of impoliteness is only minor in an individual's daily communication; Culpeper has proven otherwise in the data that he had collected in previous research. This finding is the base of Culpeper's Impoliteness Theory (2011) in which he believes “intention and context play an inherent part to categorize a circumstance as polite or impolite” (Culpeper, 2011, p.23). Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness theory is discussed in the following section.

### **2.3 Culpeper's Impoliteness Strategies**

Culpeper, in his book *Impoliteness: Using and Understanding the Language of Offence* (2011), suggests concepts that relate to impoliteness such as face, habitual Behaviour, social norms and rights and morality.

#### **2.3.1 Concept of Face**

As discussed in previous sections, Goffman's (1967) definition of 'face' is an important concept in understanding impoliteness.

Essentially, 'face' is attributed to the positive impressions people want to get from others. Besides associating ourselves with positive values, the assumptions others have about us are also important. Consequently, once an individual loses his or her 'face', they tend to worry about the impression others might have on them.

As Culpeper notes, it is difficult to deal with the concept of face as it differs from one person to the other. A positive value to one may be regarded as highly impolite by the other. For example, a person who is loud and outspoken might be appreciated by one group of people while the other group may be indifferent to that person's Behaviour. He also suggests that the potential for face loss is directly related to the degree of sensitivity of the 'face' and the perceived degree of exposure. For example, comments on an individual's work ethics target a face-sensitive area but comments on the weather do not and commenting on one's work ethics especially in front of other colleagues increases the extent of perceived face exposure.

### **2.3.2 Concept of Habitual Behaviour**

Culpeper (2011) in his book states that, regular, habitual or usual Behaviours have developed into a norm and the right thing to do for most people. Opp (1982) suggests that this is the case as these Behaviours develop into expectations and this gives people a sense of certainty. Kellerman and Reynolds (1990) expanded on this and stated that a move from these expectations is judged negatively by people. It is through these regularities, the society develop an idea of what to say and when in an appropriate context. Terkourafi (2005, p.250) points out that this understanding is easily administered by both speaker and hearer especially when dealing with face concerns and by using them shows a concern to 'community norms'.



### **2.3.3 Social Norms and Rights**

Anderson (2000, p.17) defines social norm as “a standard of Behaviour shared by a social group, commonly understood by its members authoritative or obligatory for them”. In addition, Gilbert (1989) states that when one belongs to a social group, the norms and shared values must be accepted and conformed by its social group members. Gilbert (1989) also adds that Behaviours that do not conform to these values, as indeed impoliteness usually is, receive strong negative reactions about impoliteness. Fraser (1990, p.220) briefly explains that ‘a positive evaluation (politeness)’ arises when an act corresponds to the norm and ‘a negative evaluation (impoliteness)’ is prompted when an act is conflicting the norm. For example, the usage of profanities and abusive language towards the different races in Malaysia is strictly forbidden by the legal system and members of the social constitution. Those who do not adhere to this may face backlashing from the members of the public and face legal action by the relevant authorities.

### **2.3.4 Morality**

Obligations associated with social norms underline morality. Impoliteness is seen as a violation of the accepted social norms and prompts moral outrage. The main idea to this is ‘the reciprocity social norm’ as put forth by Goulter (1960). For instance, when someone fails to thank you for a gift, it is likely that their action is seen as a violation of a social norm and hence gives rise to unfairness, which is where immorality comes in. However, reciprocity also carries a negative side as much work on aggression has reported. An individual may feel justified in retaliating when he or she is verbally attacked.

Tangney (2007) states that moral standards primarily involve Behaviours linked to negative consequences and in which contains a wide agreement that it is ‘wrong’. These standards are linked to “moral intentions, moral emotions and moral Behaviours” (Tangney, 2007, p.346).

### **2.3.5 Forms of Impoliteness**

Certain words and structures are perceived to be more impolite than others. The following words were all regularly used in Culpeper’s data and research work and as a result, the target took offence. Culpeper established nine categories based on the data he collected. However, it is important to note that using any of the strategies does not particularly guarantee that the target will take offence, as it is dependent on the context these strategies are used. Culpeper (2011) states that context is a crucial component in determining the degree of offence one experiences as a result of impoliteness. In reference to the following strategies, the square brackets indicate some of the structural characteristics of each strategy while slashes indicate alternatives. These strategies will be further explained in detail in the following chapter.

#### **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 criticism/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) Condescension**

[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 Expressions (Curses and ill-wishes)**

[go] [to hell/hang yourself/fuck yourself]

[damn/fuck] [you]

## **2.4 Other Work on Impoliteness**

Watts (2003) is one of the researchers whose work on impoliteness has been a refreshing one. All through his book, "*Politeness*", Watts (2003) debates for a new way to look at linguistic politeness. Watts made a crucial distinction between the "folk" interpretation of (im)politeness and the sociolinguistic concept of (im)politeness. The importance to differentiate these two is highlighted by Eelen (2001) as well. The folk notion is denoted as (im)politeness<sub>1</sub> and the latter, (im)politeness<sub>2</sub>. Watts (2003, p.p1-2) mentions that meanings of polite Behaviours and polite language is subject to one's own personal perception. Generally, politeness<sub>1</sub> (also impoliteness<sub>1</sub>) is a natural characteristic of good Behaviour and some of the terms that were used in preference were 'good manners', 'civil' and 'good conduct' and they are subject to change over time. Politeness<sub>2</sub> is a theoretical, linguistic notion of politeness.

Another researcher that has provided significant work on impoliteness is Bousfield (2008). He differentiated impoliteness from other varieties of offences in linguistic by considering the actions that ultimately leads to face damage. He quotes Goffman (1967) whom suggested the three types of actions which carries a threat to face; namely, intentional threats to face, incidental threats to face and accidental threats to face. Bousfield (2008) also added that for impoliteness to be successful, the intention of the speaker to offend and cause damage to face must be understood by those in the receiver role.

Aggression, according to Bousfield (2008) is also closely associated with impoliteness as it is synonym with phenomenon such as 'confrontation' and 'conflict', which underlies impoliteness. Björkqvist, Österman and Kaukiainen (2000) in their work in the field of developmental psychology note that 'aggression is not only physical by its nature, but it may take a wide variety of forms'(pg.75).

Hurst Tatsuki (2000, p.25), conducted a study on the usage of aggression in elicit complaints by Japanese students in both Japanese and English noted that "frustration can be attributed to the environment, a person or an object and the subject can respond to this frustration by lashing out". Tatsuki (2000) viewed aggression as being the possible response to a frustrating incident, object or phenomenon. The usage of taboo words is also considered to be impolite across most cultures as Jay (1992, 2000) notes that the use of taboo words, forms and phrases is impolite as the hearer(s) of these words may feel uncomfortable with its very use.

## **2.5 Malaysian Ethnicity and Communicative Politeness**

According to Smith (1987), ethnicity refers to a group of people whose members identify with each other, through a common heritage that is real or presumed. Barth (1989) on the other hand, suggests that ethnicity is ‘boundary markers’ which takes the form of religion, language, clothing, food and other cultural items that are different from other groups. Malaysians are associated with four ethnic categories; namely, Malays, Chinese, Indians and other communities such as the indigenous groups (e.g. Mah Meri, Semelai, Senoi, Kanaq), the ‘natives’ of Sabah (e.g. Bajau, Kadazan-Dusun) and Sarawak (e.g. Iban, Bidayuh). As such, issues regarding ethnicity and culture are important to Malaysians and they play a significant role in personal and social interactions and to distinguish one group from the other (Guinee, 2005). According to Thayalan (2011) the characteristics of Malaysian communication are notable in the following two areas:

- i. Politeness System
- ii. Relational Styles

### **2.5.1 Politeness System in Malaysia**

In Malaysia, refined manners or politeness is an important part of all human communication and interactions. This may be due to the fact that Malaysians observe a politeness system that represents a specific code of interactive behaviour (Ali, 2000). Politeness in the Malaysian setting also suggests that members of the society and community follow certain rules of interaction which includes particular formalities for example, when one member of the community meets the other in public, it is a shared ritual to greet each other or asking if he or she has eaten. The person’s presence can be acknowledged by saying ‘Hello’, ‘Hi’, or various communal terms such as ‘*Ni Hao*’ (How are you – in Mandarin), ‘*Nalla Irukiya*’ (Are you

doing good?- in Tamil) and ‘*Assalamualaikum*’ (Peace be upon you- in Arabic) to show high regard and respect for one another (Soo et al, 2011).

In general, Malaysians tend to be indirect and minimise friction in interactions (Jan, 1999 p.108). The Malays are expected to be non-confrontational, indirect and choose to avoid hurting other relationships with language (Mohd Salleh, 2006; Ali, 2000). This idea of indirect speech has been acknowledged by many researchers such as, David and Kuang (1999, 2005), Jan, (1999) and Kuang and Jaafar (2010). Indeed, Ali (2000) mentioned that the Malays practice indirect speech out of fear of hurting the hearer’s feelings and thus losing the harmonious balance. Searle (1975, as cited in Cole & Morgan, 1975) defines indirectness as one of the most common strategies used by intercalants to make request or to reject proposals.

The researchers also added that Malays do not indirectly indicate to the speaker if he or she has committed a breach of etiquette as they consider it to be impolite to ‘tell off’ anyone especially older adults. In the Malay culture, directness is associated with ‘*tak ada budi bahasa*’ (lack of courtesy), ‘*kurang ajar*’ (ill bred) and ‘*lupa adat*’ (lack or forgotten the Malay customary laws). Further, the Malays regard being direct is impolite and perceived as a ‘western trait’ (Jan, 1999, p.109). Directness in discourse is perceived as being arrogant, boastful and ignorant, this reflects badly on part of the parents as they have failed to instil the tradition of the Malays to their children.

Within this system, there are also different forms of address for the varying degrees of social status. According to Asmah Haji Omar (1995), there is a tendency to introduce the important person to the lower ranking person and the older person to the younger person. Also, Malaysia

is observed by Hofstede (1984) as a hierarchical society in which people tend to place high values on social distance and power. The use of titles such as Prof (Professor) and Dr (Doctor) is thus a very important aspect of interaction as these titles show the social position of these individuals. In a closer social relationship, titles and honorifics can be replaced by the use of proper kinship terms, which are widely used to show politeness (Yusof, 2007). Among the Malays, it is important for them to use proper or refined behaviour or they could be considered rude or insensitive to the dignity of others. This could be due to the fact that the Malay culture emphasises on hierarchical differences and status differentials (David & Kow 2002).

David and Kow (2002) suggest that the Chinese in Malaysia while do observe politeness; they were explicit and direct in their stand points. They generally do not like long-winded conversations and do not waste time on being indirect because time is considered precious.

### **2.5.2 Relational Styles**

Maintaining and preserving a harmonious relationship is very important for Malaysians (Hirschman, 1986). Though evidences of certain ethnocentric traits do exist among the different ethnic groups, there are common characteristics and qualities that are agreed upon and shared by these groups. According to Abdullah (1992), these qualities include maintaining group solidarity, harmony, face-saving and respecting religious beliefs. The need and desire to maintain a good 'face' makes Malaysians a group that generally values the importance of preserving a harmonious environment.

Ali (2000) also reported that Malaysians place great emphasis on social relationships and thus, tend to work in a communal sense. Such relational styles are generally observed in the Chinese culture, which is typically referred to as *quanxi* (Barton, et al., 2006). *Guanxi* is a Chinese



word used to describe high-trust, long-term relationships that allow individuals to assist one another and the term is associated with traditional Chinese family traits that stresses on obedience and obligation. In their study, Barton et al. (2006) found that cooperation among Malaysian online students can be described as “*academic quanxi*” that brings about “*silaturahmi*” (harmony and understanding) among the different ethnic groups.

Ultimately, the focus is to maintain unity and harmony among the various ethnics and races in Malaysia (Ali, 2000). In short, it is safe to conclude that Malaysians are known by researchers as a community which values politeness, peace keeping and face-saving as of the more prominent communicative style.

Soo et al. (2011) recently, on a study attempted to show how politeness is observed in the use of opening and closings by staff members of Malaysian government hospitals, however found that the traditional aspects of politeness, as literature seem to claim, existing among Malaysians, is less apparent. The data suggests that front counter staff rarely adhere to socially accepted Behavioural ways with many instances in which the staff members show “no greetings or offer of help”, “goes directly into transaction” and “impede actions that avoid eye contact with patients” (p.27). This suggest that Malaysians can be impolite even in face to face interaction.

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

In the early 1990’s, when the use of technology was really becoming the norm, people use computers for reasons such as to process data and transfer information. Chatting, emailing and internet surfing, has seemingly attracted a lot of attention starting from the mid 90’s and has developed many scholarly interest in the area of CMC. Computer-Mediated

Communication refers to the synchronous and asynchronous transmission of messages using digital techniques (December, 1996).

Santoro (1995, p.11), stated that “CMC can encompass virtually all computer users including such diverse application as statistical analysis programs, remote-sensing systems, and financial modelling programs, all fit within the concept of human communication”. Herring (1996, p.36), a scholar who is known for her work in this area, explains that “CMC is a type of communication between human beings and computers”. Yet another scholar, Locher (2010) defines CMC as a tool used to exchange communication among its interactants via the usage of electronic devices namely computers and mobile phones. Herring (2001, p.622) also notes “one of the unique characteristics feature, especially of many text-based CMC modes of communication is that they are ‘anonymous’ (faceless, bodiless) forms of interaction”. Though CMC has gained a lot of research interest from various researchers, it is important to note that most the published works on CMC to date have not focused on impoliteness issues (Locher, 2010).

The vast development of CMC since the 1990s had substantially blurred the boundaries between spoken and written interactions (Herring, 1996). Social network sites (SNS) are a type of CMC, which began around 1997 (Nardi et al., 2004). It gained status rather quickly through the years as a good platform for people to reflect and share not only on insignificant topics but also influential matters as claimed by Larsson and Hrastinski (2011). As it has become increasingly easier for people to be connected through CMC, reaching people from around the world, speaking on behalf of the oppressed and criticizing a particular group of people or an act has come to be a simpler task. The most noteworthy

of all, events that might conflict with how they are represented in the media can be shown and deliberated by the public using CMC.

### **2.6.1 Studies on Impoliteness within Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)**

Locher (2010) stated that researchers have yet to give much attention to politeness and impoliteness within CMC, yet it is easier to find past studies on politeness compared to impoliteness. Lorenzo-Dus, Blitrich and Bou-Franch (2011) investigated impoliteness strategies used by YouTube users in response to a video on a political campaign, shown on the popular online video site. Their data showed YouTube users predominately orientated towards attacking the positive face needs of the person by passing rude remarks and calling the other names. In another study on impoliteness observed in YouTube, Dynel (2012) stated that users freely used abusive and swear words because of the lack of repercussion. However, she interestingly note that “swear words do not always promote impoliteness especially when they do not overtly attack anybody” (p.30).

Dynel (2012, p. 38) also claimed that when, swearing is not used in an abusive context; it acts as an “effective solidarity building device”. This corresponds with a study by Scollon and Scollon (1995, p.60) whom stated that, “this explains the prevalence of dirty words in slang created by young people, who thereby mark their defiance and independence, and simultaneously foster in-group solidarity politeness” which is also the case for online communities.

In an investigation by Neurauter-Kessels (2011) on the occurrence of impoliteness in reader response on a British online news site, he found that, there were a growing number of users who used extremely impolite comments. He suggested that the privilege of remaining

anonymous in the online news site as being the main reason. Anonymity offers the advantage to avoid taking any responsibility for their Behaviour. Also, these users were not afraid of losing their public self-image and face since they can hide their real identity. This view is also shared by Herring (2001) who stated that most CMC modes of communication has anonymity as its commonality and this gives users the opportunity to use words that they may not necessarily use in face-to-face interaction. Neurauter-Kessels findings was similar to Suler (2004) who reported that people react and behave differently in face to face communication and when they are communicating online. In his study, he found that when dealing with a figure of authority, people would not blatantly pass comments for fear of punishment. However, communicating online made them unafraid to speak their mind or use inappropriate remarks, since they do not see the other person.

### **2.6.2 Flame messages in CMC**

Morand and Ocker (2003) claimed that online communication is much easier to be tainted with potential FTAs than in face-to-face communication. This is because identities in online forums are anonymous and users often use a pseudonym, increasing opportunities for negative online Behaviours such as sending “flame” messages that contain derogatory statements and threats (Dubrovsky, Kiesler & Sethna, 1991; Siegel et al., 1986). Sproull and Kiesler (1984, p.1128) states that flame messages in CMC include, “swearing, shouting at their terminals, and refusing to make a group decision until a group member gave in”. Kim and Raja (1997, p.7) claim that flaming is “to use verbal abuses, make inappropriate comments, or criticize harshly” while Baron (1984, p.130) defines flame messages as “speaking incessantly, hurling insults, using profanity”.

Siegal et al. (1986), in their study on the effects of CMC on interpersonal Behaviour and effective communication reported that, the usage and much reliance on technology and the anonymity which comes with its usage, might lead to the loss of personal identity and promote uninhibited Behaviour which consequently might lead to feeling of deindividuation.

In addition, another study by Chesebro and Bonsall (1989) revealed that CMC has the potential to lessen an individual's sense of personal responsibility to other interactants since being anonymous, hiding their real characters and using fake identities to interact with others is always a possibility. According to Kiesler (1991), anonymity allows people the pleasure to freely criticism the other without restrictions while giving them the confidence to communicate spontaneously. Kiesler also adds "Anonymity makes it easier to disagree, confront, or heavily criticize the opinions of others" (p.49). Smolensky et al, (1990) in their study on CMC found that people who did not know each other has the highest number of uninhibited verbal Behaviour. They claim that, due to the absence of social appearance and context cues, interactants seem to view each other as objects, which can be easily exploited, insulted, ignored and hurt with relative freedom.

Most of the previous literature discussed seems to agree that uninhibited Behaviour occurs in CMC due to lack of social context cues and its absence seem to cause a rise in flame messages. As anonymity and CMC are closely linked, I believe flaming occurs in most CMC context due to the pleasure of remaining anonymous and lack of social cues.

### **2.6.3 Swearing and Profanities in CMC**

Swearing is an act of uttering aggressive languages – or “taboo” words – which is often deterred by “social convention” (Jay, 2009, p. 153). The high arousal of emotion is a defining characteristic of swearing (Jay, 2009; Kwon & Cho, 2017), and thus studying the pragmatics of swearing in the context of online social interactions begs scholarly 993 Offensive.

In a study by K. Hazel Kwon, Anatoliy Gruzd, (2017), swearing can be distinguished into two types that can occur in an online public setting. First, interpersonal swearing refers to a designative use of taboo words, targeting specific individuals in the process of social interactions. Interpersonal swearing can trigger reciprocal flaming and trolling among anonymous users, as multiple studies have found negative effects of uncivil social interactions online (Alonzo & Aiken, 2004; Cho & Kwon, 2015; Coyne et al., 2011). The second type of swearing is public swearing, distinguished from interpersonal swearing due to no target-specificity. Verbal aggression is not intended to be a direct interpersonal attack. Instead, public swearing functions to accentuate – in an aggressive manner – a speaker’s feelings toward an entity, issue, or event beyond the involved discussants. While an immediate interpersonal attack is less obvious, public swearing is nonetheless a form of emotional outbursts, characterized as potentially agonistic and uncivil.

## **2.7 Theory of Social Presence**

Interpersonal relationships or social presence is created when people connect with others in a social context (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997). Short, William and Christie (1976) define social presence as the “degree of salience of the other person in interaction and the

consequent salience of the interpersonal relationship” (p.65). The ability to establish such relationships greatly reduces in online communication because all contact is through an electronic device. This causes group cohesion to become negatively low and members feel disconnected. They also suggest two concepts; intimacy and immediacy to be associated with social presence. Intimacy depends on nonverbal factors such as smiling and eye contact. Immediacy is the “measure of the psychological distance that a communicator puts between himself or herself and the object of his/her communication” (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997, p.9), both which are absent in online communication.

The goal of creating social presence in any environment whether it being online or in a face-to-face interaction, is to create a level of ease and comfort for participants. According to Whiteman (2002), “people feel more comfortable with each other when they share the same kind of social value and kinship” (p.8). Rourke et al. (2001) measure social presence using three types of communicative response:

*i. Interactive response*

According to Rourke et al. (2001), an interactive response helps sustain relationships, when participants are open to maintaining a prolonged contact, and indicate encouragement, interpersonal support and accept other members.

*ii. Affective response*

Affective response refers to expressions of emotions, mood and feelings. Though the capacity to express these types of socio-emotional communication such as body language, intonations and facial expressions is greatly reduced in CMC, affective response can be expressed in other ways such as the use of emoticons, self-

disclosure and humour. Humour according to Rourke et al. (2001) is like an invite to start a conversation and it reduces social distance in CMC. Social presence is also further improved with self-disclosure this is because when people begin to share personal experiences and information about themselves, it is more likely that individuals will be more receptive to each other and establish trust and support (Rourke et al., 2001).

*iii. Cohesive response*

Rourke et al. (2001) defined three indicators of cohesive response that maintains social presence in a group. There are phatic salutations, vocatives and the use of pronouns such as 'we', 'us' and 'our'. Phatic salutations are communication acts that are used to share feelings and establish sociability through communicative acts such as inquiring how one's day was. Vocatives refer to addressing participants by names in an attempt to establish closer ties with the addressee. The use of pronouns to address other members of the group such as 'we', 'us' and 'our' is an indicator of social presence because it represents feelings of closeness (Rourke et al., 2001).

Social presence is an important aspect of CMC, however in online communication; it is rather difficult to create positive social presence as it requires conscious and deliberate effort by online participants especially when discussing a serious and important issue such as the Low Yat Plaza incident.



## **2.8 An Overview of YouTube**

To date, we have many social networking sites which cover stories across all genres from food, education, political issues and fashion. Social networking sites are one type of CMC that enables communication and sharing of information from all around the globe. Hampton, Goulet, Rainie and Purcell (2011) has defined social networking as a medium with certain similarities such as the ability to make friends, share opinions and comments, show approval on another individual's content by clicking the 'like' button. Social networking is seen as a unique form of CMC because its users meet, interact and communicate with strangers (Ellison, 2007).

YouTube is one of the more popular social networking sites that enable its users to comment and discuss on various video posted. These videos are made available to the public to be debated and discussed upon. YouTube was launched in February 2005 with the slogan "Broadcast Yourself" with an activity rate of 100 million views and 65,000 video being uploaded daily (Paolilio, 2008). According to a British online new portal, [www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk), YouTube came in second as the most viewed page on the Internet with 15.7 trillion visits in 2015. The site also reported that the time people spent watching videos and commenting on the site is increasing by 60% each year. In terms of online video sites, YouTube is the only video search engine to ever make it to the top 10 most viewed websites in the world.

YouTube is a unique social network site as compared to other sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Google+ in terms of network access and information the site allows its users. YouTube is an anonymous user-generated video platform in which users are not required to

disclose any personal information to log in. This social network site allows its users to communicate through video comments and ratings (Halpern & Gibbs, 2013).

Additionally, YouTube is a community in which “netiquette” or rules for online Behaviour is not strictly followed (Yus, 2011). The ‘YouTube community guideline’ calls for mutual respect for all users and their difference in opinions. This guideline also announces low or no tolerance to abuses and threats in comments. However, it is not sure how YouTube ensures compliance to the guidelines given the saliency of hateful speech found in most YouTube video comments. The diverse topic of videos featured in YouTube, in addition to the diversity of the users’ background (Moor et al., 2010) often leads to the rise of hate speech and the development of aggression. Furthermore, according to Lorenzo-Dus et al. (2011, p.2583) most YouTube sequences are “polylogal and not dyadic, involving various users in a conversation”. This means that the responses are in isolation, which may lead to higher degrees of impoliteness and misunderstandings.

### **2.8.1 Content and Popularity of YouTube videos**

Question about the balance of user vs. professionally-generated content on YouTube has inspired many researchers. Kruitbosch and Knack (2008) found that professionally-generated videos dominate the most viewed videos, but in a random sample, user-generated videos were more numerous. What is this user-generated content like? Ding et al. (2011) showed that 63% of popular user channels published “user-copied content” instead of authentic user-generated content. Most uploaders consistently uploaded either type. However, the most popular user-generated content exceeded the most-popular user-copied content in popularity. This brings out the fact that multiple, nearly identical copies of the same content exist on YouTube. De Oliveira studied near-duplicate videos on YouTube

(De Oliveira et al., 2010), showing that people consider audio, video, and semantics in similarity judgments.

An important factor for a video's popularity is its visibility inside YouTube and in Google search results (Figueiredo, Benevenuto, & Almeida, 2011). It is known that the most video views originate from two sources: YouTube search and Suggested content (Liikkanen, 2014; Zhou, Khemmarat, & Gao, 2010). Social sharing also generates popularity quickly, but the attractiveness of these "social videos" also wears off more rapidly than those of less frequently shared. Different types of content are shared differently, videos in "Pets & animals" genre category having the most of highly shared videos (42.3%), whereas music videos are shared less frequently (12.8%; Broxton et al., 2013). Sharing patterns may partially explain why most YouTube videos capture only a geographically constrained audience (Brodersen, Scellato, & Wattenhofer, 2012).

### **2.8.2 YouTube Engagement**

Engagement has been defined as "a user-initiated action" (Gluck, 2012, p. 8), which leads to a 'co-creation' of value (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013). Other scholars like Hollebeek (2011) viewed engagement as a multidimensional concept that comprises not only Behavioural (actions) but also cognitive (thoughts), and emotional (feelings) aspects. Engagement may be viewed as an individual's interaction with media. This study views engagement as comprising Behavioural aspects or click-based interactions (participation). Online Behavioural engagement on Facebook is typically manifested symbolically through actions such as liking, commenting, and sharing. On YouTube, such engagement is manifested through actions such as liking, disliking, commenting, sharing and uploading

videos. Moreover, viewing videos and reading comments is included as a form of engagement. Users may choose to remain passive by simply consuming content, or play an active role by participating in various interactions, and even repurpose content to fit their needs. Engagement in the form of user participation on social media is not uniformly distributed, as a few users do a significant fraction of work.

This is evident on sites such as Wikipedia where a small percentage of users write articles or edit them (Kittur, Suh, Pendleton, & Chi, 2007). Similarly, a fraction of visitors contribute videos on YouTube and comment and engage in discussions on videos. This type of distribution in terms of user participation on sites is known as the Pareto principle that suggests 80% of the work is done by 20% of individuals (Best & Neuhauser, 2006), which is also similar to the power law distribution in mathematics (Newman, 2005).

## **2.9 Characteristics and Features of Social Media**

Social media sites (e.g., YouTube, and Facebook) are a popular distribution outlet for users looking to share their experiences and interests on the Web. These sites host substantial amounts of user-contributed materials (e.g., photographs, videos, and textual content) for a wide variety of real-world events of different type and scale.

This 2x2 framework of “canonical” social network research shares some noteworthy commonalities with the key novel features of social media technologies. In their seminal paper, Boyd and Ellison (2007, p. 211) define social network sites as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.” While

these core features of SNS have been remarkably robust to new developments, the evolution of social media since the original publication of their definition suggests several necessary amendments.

First, the “boundedness” of SNS has diminished, as these platforms have extended their functionality beyond the confines of a website. Many platforms provide an application programming interface that allows other technologies, such as other websites and mobile “apps,” to build on the features and data available in the focal platform (Ellison, 2007). For example, Facebook’s “Open Graph” protocol, introduced in 2010, enables all websites to integrate some functions of the Facebook platform (e.g., “like” button, user authentication) into their own sites. Third-party apps also facilitate increased interoperability among previously independent social media sites, allowing shared content to cross the boundaries of multiple distinct sites. For example, some applications allow users to post content simultaneously to Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter. Thus, the boundaries between social media platforms are less pronounced than they were previously.

The dictionary definition of a medium conveys a number of related meanings: something in a middle position, a means of conveying something (i.e., a channel), and a condition in which something may flourish. All three meanings applies how current social media platforms mediate social networks. Much of the activity may occur outside the website, but the platform continues to be positioned in the middle of and mediate the relationships of the users it connects. It also conveys digital information among users, serving as a channel of communication. Finally, the features of the particular platform cause certain types of social interactions to flourish, more so than others.

Second, the nature of the user profile has changed considerably in recent years, requiring a deeper understanding of how users are represented in the network. Ellison (2007) describe the user profile as an explicit construction on behalf of the user that provides him or her with an opportunity to

“type oneself into being” ... by filling out forms containing a series of questions. The profile is generated using the answers to these questions, which typically include descriptors such as age, location, interests, and an “about me” section (Ellison 2007, pp. 211, 213).

Recent developments in social media platforms have augmented or replaced this user-constructed profile. Specifically, Ellison (2007) note that profiles now contain information from various sources, such as “user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system provided data” (p. 154). These features expand the digital profile, beyond an exclusively intentional and conscious construction by the user, toward incorporating an automatic and passive record of the user’s activity. Ellison (2007) further note that people can access content on the platform through means other than viewing the digital profile of others. People often obtain content from content streams automatically filtered from the network by the platform (Naaman et al. 2010). Users can also access content through search mechanisms, such as Google-like algorithmic search capabilities. For example, they might search for keywords in LinkedIn profiles to find people with particular skills or experience.

This ability to access and search content through various mechanisms also raises questions about the ability to protect content from others’ access. Privacy has become a more significant issue as the use and adoption of social media has grown (Gross & Acquisti 2005; McCreary 2008). Although briefly addressed in their discussion of the “private or semi-private” 11 nature of the user profile, neither Ellison’s (2007) original definition nor

the updates effectively capture the important role of privacy settings for social media. Most platforms provide robust features for users to control who can access the content they contribute. This control affects access to profile information and also can extend to all content contributed by the user to the platform.

The updated definition of social media networks possesses four essential features (Table 2), such that users (1) have a unique user profile that is constructed by the user, by members of their network, and by the platform; (2) access digital content through, and protect it from, various search mechanisms provided by the platform; (3) can articulate a list of other users with whom they share a relational connection; and (4) view and traverse their connections and those made by others on the platform.

Table 2: Core features of social media platforms (adapted from Ellison 2007).

Digital Profile	The platform provides a unique user profile that is constructed by
Search and Privacy	Users can access digital content through and protect it from various search mechanisms provided by the platform
Relational Ties	The platform provides mechanisms for users to articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection.
Network Transparency	Users can view and traverse their connections and those made by others on the platform.

These technical aspects exclude previous generations of collaboration technologies, such as email or electronic discussion boards that do not allow users to establish profiles or lists of connections that can be viewed or traversed by others. It may, however, include technologies such as wikis, blogs, or microblogs, though Ellison (2007) do not regard

these technologies as “social network sites.” For example, while Twitter is often referred to as a microblog service, it would be included in our definition because it possesses these features.

Third, social media platforms have been used for a much wider variety of purposes in recent years than originally envisioned. Ellison (2007) assert that users primarily use social media sites not to establish new social connections but to maintain existing social relationships. Although some researchers have critiqued their choice of terminology as overly broad (Beer, 2008), these extensions may have not gone far enough to account for the various ways social media platforms are used. People use social media to support a broad range of social relationships, which may bear little connection to offline social relationships. Celebrities and sports figures use social media networks to communicate directly with fans with whom they have no offline relationship. Organizations also maintain profiles on social media platforms, and how people interact with organizations (and vice-versa) will differ from purely interpersonal relationships.

Furthermore, people also use social media in ways that do not primarily involve interpersonal interaction. For example, though wiki platforms may support social networking purposes (Kane & Fichman, 2009), article development on Wikipedia involves collaborative production that may or may not involve interpersonal interaction. Likewise, the primary purpose of many ecommerce networks (e.g., Tripadvisor, Amazon.com) typically involves reviewing products, not interacting with other users.



### **2.9.1 Deliberation**

Traditionally, discussion has been considered a key factor in societal consensus-building (Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002), since it increases tolerance, highlights opportunities for involvement and encourages engagement in public life (Walsh, 2004). Although there are many different ways to conceptualize deliberation, in the last few decades scholars from different research traditions have included in their definitions at least two common ideas: the concept of a genre or form of communication characterized by “the performance of a set of communicative Behaviours that promote thorough group discussion” (Burkhalter, Gastil, & Kelshaw, 2002, p. 400), and the notion that in this process of communication the individuals involved weigh carefully the reasons for and against some of the propositions presented by others (Gastil, 2000; Schudson, 1997). Habermas (1989), in one of the most referenced conceptualizations, defines deliberation as an interchange of rational–critical arguments among a group of individuals, triggered by a common or public problem, whose main focus or topic of discussion is to find a solution acceptable to all who have a stake in the issue.

#### **2.9.1.1 Deliberation and the Internet**

Since the advent of the Internet, scholars have heralded its potential to democratize communication, and more recently research has highlighted the role of social media specifically in enhancing civic participation and democratic decision-making (e.g., Lerman, 2007; Macintosh, 2004). Janssen and Kies (2005) found that online spaces enabled decentralized communication of many-to-many since each participant is normally equally entitled to comment or raise a new question, and participants are free to express their opinions. Research has also found that the written and asynchronous characteristics of the

medium may support more reflexive, rational and argumentative conversations (Burnett, Consalvo & Ess, 2007). Others have recognized in these types of tools a more appropriate medium for deliberation than synchronous channels (Coleman & Gotze, 2001) because they provide users a tool to compose messages at their own pace, constituting a more favourable channel for a rational–critical form of debate (Dahlberg, 2001).

On the other hand, researchers have questioned whether the form of discourse fostered by computer-mediated discussions captures the benefits of the face-to-face ideal. Several reasons have been presented by scholars to justify this stance. First, computer-mediated communication (CMC) has been historically regarded as an impersonal phenomenon that deindividuates participants, encouraging uncivil discourse (flaming) and group-based stereotyping (Kiesler, Siegel, & McGuire, 1984). Papacharissi (2004) identified the absence of cues as the main condition to encourage flaming and uncivil Behaviour in online political discourse. Similarly, Davis (1999) found that users who participate in online discussions about politics usually make comments only in groups that agree with their own views, concluding that online deliberation mainly reinforces pre-existing views by perpetuating a confirmation bias.

### **2.9.3 Identifiability and Networked Information Access Online**

The level of identifiability vs. anonymity is a media affordance likely to influence the nature of online deliberation. Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE) model expands on the basic deindividuation theory that examines how in crowds people will act in ways that are often not perceived as rational. When somebody is in a crowd there is a certain amount of anonymity that can affect how they will act. Based on SIDE, scholars argue that given the relative lack of social cues in CMC, individuals may find it easier to

issue unpleasant decisions as they are divorced from the human consequences of their actions (Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1998). “Deindividuation theory proposes that Behaviour becomes socially deregulated under conditions of anonymity and group immersion, as a result of reduced self-awareness” (Spears, Postmes, Lea, & Wolbert, 2002, p. 94). According to SIDE theory, under conditions in which participants’ individual identity is not salient, group norms and identity are triggered, and this in-group identity leads to stereotyping of out-group members. Similarly, in CMC contexts that allow for less exchange of social context cues, this has a depersonalizing affect check that may lead to uninhibited Behaviour and flaming practices (Sproull & Kiesler, 1992). This suggests that anonymity and deindividuation may have a negative, divisive effect on online deliberation.

Another media affordance that is likely to influence the quality of online deliberation is the level of networked information access. Research has shown that individual-level variables alone are insufficient for explaining civic Behaviours, and that interactions within and across different types of community settings can be important catalysts for deliberation and civic action (Scheufele, Nisbet, Brossard, & Nisbet, 2004). Studies for example have consistently found a positive relationship between the size of the network in which individuals discuss civic matters and participatory (Huckfeldt, Mendez, & Osborn, 2004; McLeod et al., 1999; Moy & Gastil, 2006).

Eveland and Hively (2009) explain that as one’s network size increases, the probability of interaction with sources of new information grows, since one is more likely to encounter a higher number of politically active individuals. Similarly, McLeod et al. (1999) argue that larger networks are more likely to stimulate discussion since people have more possibilities to find individuals with whom they share interests and feel comfortable interacting.

Furthermore, Scheufele et al (2004) argue that when networks are expanded, participants are more likely to encounter opposing points of view. This exposure to disagreement is likely to produce greater cognitive activity (Levine & Russo, 1995) since it forces individuals to learn about alternative perspectives, which leads them to reflect more carefully on what they already know. This in turn increases their levels of self-efficacy and makes them less intimidated by speaking up, which may engender a more egalitarian relationship and increase overall participation levels.

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## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the qualitative method used in this study to investigate the types of impoliteness strategies used in comments by YouTube users and the realization of language used to contribute to impoliteness. The following sections, describe the instruments used, samples involved, data collection methods and procedures as well as the data analysis methods used throughout the study.

### **3.1 Theoretical Framework**

From Table 3.1, it can be seen that Culpeper has built a conventionalized 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 2.9, 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 3.1.

Table 3.1: Culpeper (2011) Impoliteness Strategies

Face	1) Insults
	2) Pointed criticism/complaints
	3) Negative expressives (Curses and ill-wishes)
	4) Challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presupposition
Equity Rights	1) Condescension
	2) Message enforcers
	4) Dismissal
	5) Silencers
	6) Threats

Insults are divided into four subcategories namely; personalized negative vocatives which consists of name calling such as you bastard/moron and personalized negative assertions are statements used to bring down or look down on some for example, ‘you are such a disappointment’. Personalized negative references are used to pass a comment with reference to the human body for example, ‘your little stinking body/mouth’, and lastly personalized third-person negative references in the hearing of the target is a strategy used to insult someone not within your circle.

The second strategy under ‘face’ orientation is pointed criticism and complaints, which is used to express discontent, for example, ‘this is absolutely horrible’. Negative expressives (Curse words and ill wishes) show rudeness for example ‘go fuck/hang yourself’. The final strategy under the conceptual ‘face’ orientation is challenging or unpalatable questions

and/or presupposition, used to provoke and challenge as seen in the following example, ‘you want to argue with me or go to jail?’

The second conceptual orientation in Culpeper’s (2011) Impoliteness Strategies is equity rights. Condescension is a strategy used when the speaker wants to demonstrate dominance and superiority over the hearer as seen in the following phrase, ‘that’s being babyish’. Message enforcer is used to emphasize something mostly to irritate the hearer, for example ‘do you understand me?’ and ‘you got it?’ The next strategy is dismissal and it used to disregard someone for instance, ‘go away’ and ‘piss off’. Silencer is used particularly to stop the other from talking any further, for example ‘shut your mouth/face’. Lastly, threat is a strategy used to add fuel to the conversation, for example, ‘I’ll smash you face if you don’t...’

### 3.1.2 Typology of Verbal Impoliteness

Culpeper (2011) developed a typology of conventionalized impolite formulae based on his own data. The typology will be used as a guide in identifying the realization of impolite language use (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Culpeper’s (2011) Conventionalized Formulae of Impoliteness Strategy

<p><b>Insults</b></p>	<p><b>1. Personalized negative vocatives</b>          [you] [[fucking/rotten/dirty/fat/little/etc.]          [moron/fuck/plonker/dickhead/          berk/pig/shit/bastard/loser/liar/etc.]] [you]</p> <p><b>2. Personalized negative assertions</b>          [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]</p>
-----------------------	---

	<p>arithmetic/etc.] [you] [disgust/make] [me] [sick/etc.]</p> <p><b>3. Personalized negative references</b> [your] [little/stinking] [mouth/act/arse/body/etc.]</p> <p><b>4. Personalized third-person negative references in the hearing of the target</b> [the] [daft] [bimbo] [she's] [nutzo]</p>
<b>Pointed criticism/complaints</b>	<p>[that/this/it][is/was] [absolutely/extraordinarily/unspeakably/etc.] [bad/rubbish/crap/horrible/terrible/etc.]</p>
<b>Negative Expressive (Curses and ill-wishes)</b>	<p>[go] [to hell/hang yourself/fuck yourself] [damn/fuck] [you]</p>
<b>Challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presupposition</b>	<p>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?</p>
<b>Message enforcers</b>	<p>listen here (as a preface) you got it? (as a tag) read my lips do you understand [me]? (as a tag)</p>
<b>Condescension</b>	<p>[that] ['s/being] [babyish/childish/etc.]</p>
<b>Dismissals</b>	<p>[go] [away] [get] [lost/out] [fuck/piss/shove] [off]</p>
<b>Silencers</b>	<p>[shut] [it/your mouth, face/etc.] [shut] [the fuck] up</p>



<b>Threats</b>	[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]
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### 3.2 Research Site

Data will be collected through comments made by participants on YouTube in response to the Low Yat Plaza incident. A total of 2,224 comments were collected from two videos on 12<sup>th</sup> July and 13<sup>th</sup> July 2015. Data are collected from two videos on 12<sup>th</sup> July to 13<sup>th</sup> July 2015. The research site can be accessed through the following link:

[https://www.YouTube.com/results?search\\_query=lowYat+plaza+incident](https://www.YouTube.com/results?search_query=lowYat+plaza+incident)

#### 3.2.1 Low Yat Plaza

Low Yat Plaza is a mall situated in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, which specializes in electronics and IT products. In 2009, it was named as “Malaysia’s Largest IT Lifestyle Mall” by the Malaysian Book of Records. Low Yat Plaza sells an array of electronic gadgets namely laptops, computers, printers, hand phones and cameras. According to Vulcanpost ([www.vulcanpost.my](http://www.vulcanpost.my)), a technology and lifestyle blog, Low Yat is especially known for its much reduced prices for various hand phones, the reason being, its retailers, besides offering genuine products (Ori set), also sells non-original products (AP set).

An ‘ori’ set means that the phone was brought into the country via an official distributor and it has given the right to the local distributor to sell it across the country. The authorized distributor also offers an original warranty, which can be used directly at a certified service centre without going through a third party. An AP set however, are phones that are imported from various countries (e.g. China, Mexico, Indonesia) into the country through a

local distributor and they do not contain original parts. Also, Vulcanpost states that, an AP phone is much cheaper compared to the original set and therefore, popular among teens and adults from middle and middle low income groups.

### **3.2.2 Methodological Advantages and Disadvantages**

The methodological advantage of using YouTube to gather data is first and foremost its rich source of readily available data, which could be attained easily and in a short span of time. Moreover, naturally occurring data could be collected since the presence of the researcher is not seen or felt by the participants when writing their comments therefore, it is unlikely that the researcher will be facing the observer's paradox (Bousfield, 2008).

The issue here however is probably whether the data is collected ethically (as addressed in the Section 3.9). People who comment on a public space such as YouTube should be aware that their comments are read and observed by others freely. The main obstacle that could be faced by the researcher in carrying out a CMC research is the fluidity of web.

### 3.4 Samples

Based on the two selected YouTube videos, a total of 1,224 comments were posted by 1,203 users about the Low Yat Plaza incident (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Summary of Data Collection

Videos	Total No. of Users	Total No. of Comments	No. of Impolite Comments	Other Comments (Disregarded)
Video 1	427	895	74	821
Video 2	326	629	47	582
Total:	753	2,224	121	XX

Although there were many comments made by YouTube users in response to the two selected videos (1,224 comments from 753 users) only users that give impolite comments were considered as samples and only these comments are considered as data. Some of the users commented and replied to another comment more than once, but this is not taken into consideration because this study focuses on the comments and not the participants. Also, comments that were written in *Bahasa Malaysia* were also disregarded.

Since YouTube is an online site in which anonymity and the usage of pseudonyms are high, it is not possible to determine the gender of the users as most of these users chose not to reveal their gender or any other information on their public profile. This is understandable as some individuals prefer to remain anonymous so that they may not feel accountable or at risk for their actions and inappropriate comments.

### 3.5 Instruments

Since YouTube is made accessible to the public, it is not difficult to search for data as there are search engines available in the site. The keyword, “Low Yat incident 12<sup>th</sup> July” is used to search for videos related to the brawl (refer to Section 1.0). There were 13 videos, which appeared from the search engine and two videos (based on the number of most comments) were chosen as the source of data throughout this study. These videos were also chosen because the comments made by YouTube users were overwhelming with impolite comments.

The first video, ‘Incident outside Low Yat Plaza’ was posted by YouTube user, ‘*Satu*’. It has garnered more than 150,000 views to date. The video contains a total number of 634 comments from its users (refer to the following link).

Video 1

<https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=bWksUX-gsV8>



The second video, ‘Chinese & Malay fight at Plaza Low Yat, Bukit Bintang. Kuala Lumpur’ was posted by ‘*hassanpost*’ and has it has been viewed 208,715 time by the public. It also has 1,590 comments making it the highest commented Low Yat Plaza incident video (refer to the following link).

## Video 2

[https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=eIb66QcntY&oref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.YouTube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D-eIb66QcntY&has\\_verified=1](https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=eIb66QcntY&oref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.YouTube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D-eIb66QcntY&has_verified=1)



There are a total of 123 comments analysed from both videos using Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness framework. Through initial observation, it was noticed that not all 123 comments can be identified using Culpeper's framework and thus other categories of Impoliteness Strategies was developed (see Chapter 4.2.1.4)

### 3.6 Method

The current study adopts a qualitative research design to analyse Culpeper's (2011) Model of Impoliteness in YouTube comments. Patton (1985, p.1) defines qualitative research as "an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there". Patton also states that the findings may not be a prediction of what may happen in the future but rather, it is an attempt to understand the nature of that setting. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) those who practice qualitative research, "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of meaning people bring to them". Most recent research in the area of politeness and impoliteness in online communication (Halim 2015; Chang & Haugh 2011; Shuang 2010; Soo et al., 2013) have opted for a qualitative research design as well as this method enables researchers to explore and analyze the issue and phenomena in depth.

### **3.7 Data Collection and Procedures**

YouTube is a website made accessible to the public and contains comments and speculations regarding the Low Yat Plaza incident, which took place on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2015. It is observed that, these social media users from different background come together to share their thoughts and views on the topic and issue. Issues and comments, which are political and religious in nature, are included in the analysis as they are relevant to the purpose of the study.

The first method of data collection comprises of gathering of all significant comments from both videos. Then, these comments are grouped and categorized according to a coding scheme, which will then be analysed using the adopted framework and assigned a suitable impolite strategy and linguistic device that reflects the impolite phrase or word.

The findings of the study are presented in two stages; namely, STAGE 1 unfolds the impoliteness strategies used by Malaysians on social media and secondly, STAGE 2 ascertains the realization of impoliteness in the language used by Malaysians (see Figure 3.3). The realization of impoliteness in language is identified with the guide from Culpeper's (2011) typology of conventionalized impolite formulae (see Table 3.2).

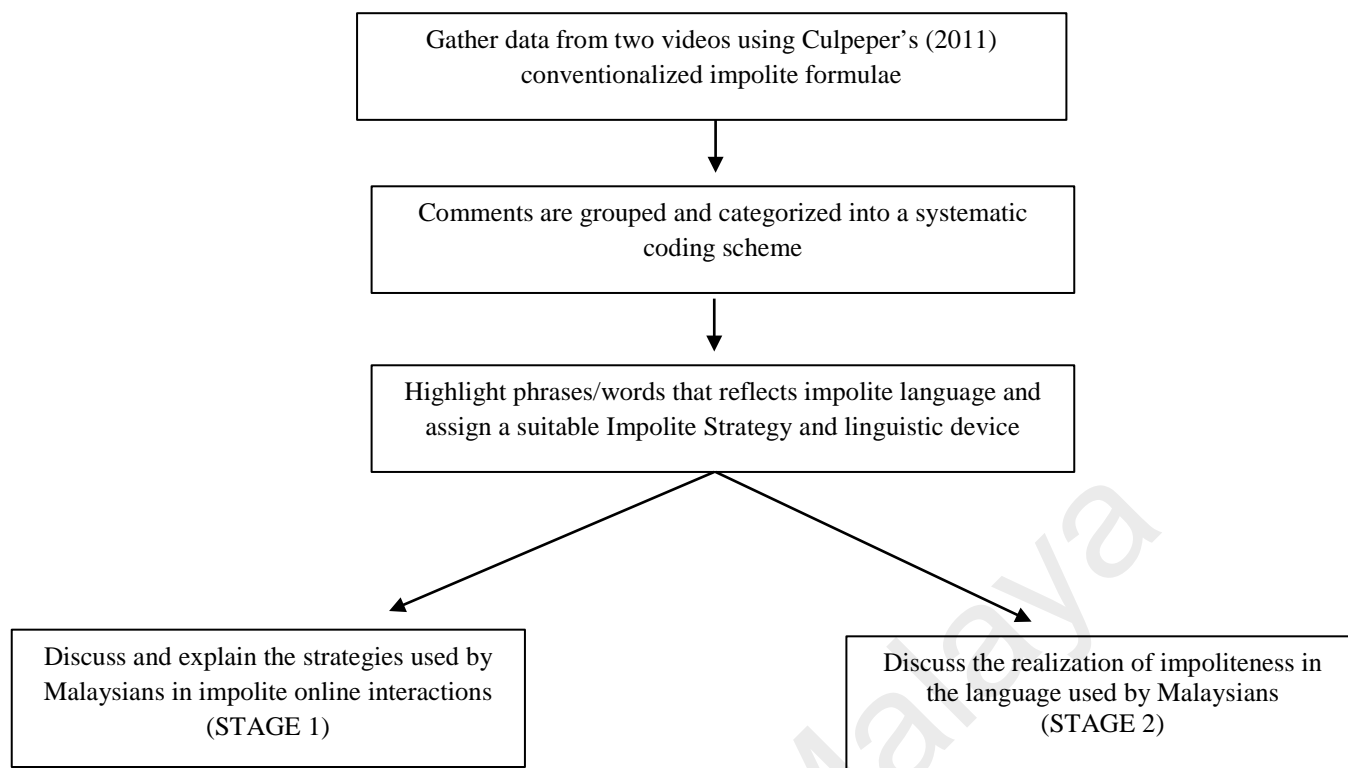


Figure 3.3: Method of Data Collection

### 3.8 Data Analysis

Content analysis (CA) is used as the data analysis approach. Research using the CA approach focused on characteristics of language as communication with attention to the contextual meaning of the text and content (Budd, Thorp & Donohew, 1967; Lindkvist 1981; McTavish & Pirro, 1990; Tesch, 1990). The researcher has chosen to use CA as it aims to achieve a condensed and wide description of the phenomenon at hand.

The analysis of data begins with developing a categorization matrix according to Culpeper's (2011) Impoliteness Strategy (see Table 3.2). Each comment is reviewed using Culpeper's typology that guides the categorization of data into its most appropriate strategy. Codes in the coding scheme represent an impoliteness strategy as follows:

- insults (INS),
- pointed criticism/complaints (PC),
- negative expressives (NE),

- challenging or unpalatable questions (CH),
- condescension (CON),
- message enforcers (ME),
- dismissals (DS),
- silencers (SL) and
- threats (TH).

Concurrently, the comments are also analyzed to determine the realization of language use. The realization of language use can be divided into two categories namely; grammatical realization and impolite talk. These two categories are identified after analyzing

### **Grammatical Realization**

- profanities (PRO),
- interjections (INT),
- imperatives (IMP),
- adjectives (ADJ),
- similes (SIM)

### **Impolite Talk**

- taboo topics (TB),
- sarcasm (SAR)



Table 3.3 shows the presentation of data in the current study. Each unique coding scheme is developed to ease the categorization of data.

Table 3.4: Impoliteness Coding Scheme

No.	Participant ID	Comment	Impoliteness strategy	Realization of Language Use
1	Good Mornooevenight	This Malaysian police are really useless.	PC	ADJ
2	Gary Nguyen	If u r man enough, fight 1	TH	INT
3	Stealth	Fucking Malays!	NE	PRO

In the analysis chapter (i.e. Chapter 4) the comments from the coding scheme are presented in a systematic way as seen in Figure 3.4.



Figure 3.4: Presentation of Data

### 3.8.1 Reliability and Validity of Coding and Analysis

To ensure the reliability of data, the researcher describes in detail the link between the data and results by presenting authentic examples. To achieve internal validity, the researcher conducted a pilot-study and the findings and results were presented to an academic staff for approval.

### 3.8.2 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to study emerging patterns in the data. Comments from a third video entitled; *Scene of Low Yat Plaza, Malaysia* on 11 and 13 July 2015 was used to collect preliminary data. The video can be found in the following link;

<https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=KgW-lvEOnac>. Table 3.4 presents the preliminary data found in the pilot study.

Table 3.5: Preliminary Data of pilot study

No.	Participant ID	Comment	Impoliteness strategy	Realization of Language Use
1	Steady625	All you Malays are all <b>fucking racist!!!</b> and Uneducated	INS2	PRO/INT
2	Gary Nguyen	“If u r man enough, <b>fight 1 to 1 lah!!!</b> ”	TH	INT
3	Farid Zee	<b>Fuck</b> chinese all the time. Wait and see <b>fucking moron</b> . We <b>revenge</b> and come to you	NE/INS1/TH	PRO
4	Faridah Atan	<b>Fucking stupid chinese</b> they are <b>real liars</b> .	INS/INS1	PRO

In Table 3.4, it can be observed that insults are the most frequently used impoliteness strategy (N=4) with the use of the word “fucking moron” and “fucking racist”. This type of insult is categorized as “Personalized Negative Vocatives”. This category is marked with the use of the strategy of name calling as depicted in the words in bold followed by threats (N=2) and negative expressions (N=1). It is observed that profanities (N=3) is the most frequent grammatical realization. It is identified with the use of strong abusive words such as “fuck”. This is followed by the use of interjections (N=2)

In the pilot study, it was found that Malaysians that commented online on the Low Yat Plaza incident used the impoliteness strategy of “Insult” most frequently to cause social face damage to interlocutors. The pilot study also found that use of profane and abusive words marked the use of impolite words. In the preliminary data, “fuck” was the word used

most often to insult and this word is also categorized under the category of profanities. The preliminary study revealed that the research design was feasible and thus, no changes were made.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations on Internet-Mediated Research (IMR)**

According to the Ethics Guideline for Internet-Mediated Research (2013, p.3), IMR can be defined as “any research using the remote acquisition of data from or about human participants using the Internet and its associated technologies”. The research designs adopted by IMR researchers, often does not involve any face-to-face presence in the collection of data. This greatly restricted the researchers’ capacity to know whether the participant is actively aware and is knowingly participating in the study. Therefore, IMR raises ethical considerations that need to be properly addressed. One of main ethical issues as raised by the *Code of Human Research and Ethics (2011)* is, online privacy.

The code of ethics and conduct notes that unless consent is already sought, observation of public Behaviour can take place in public situation in which those being observed “would expect to be observed by strangers”. The guideline further adds that, communication and social sites are deemed as private when you need a unique username and password to access data. In the case of YouTube, it is a public space as a username and password is not required to view comments. Based on Herring (1996), on responsible research in CMC, it is safe to conclude that this study is done using an unrestricted public space, thus no permission is required from participants.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of data on how Malaysians use impoliteness strategies in social media comments obtained from two videos on the Low Yat Plaza incident. The findings are discussed according to the theoretical framework based on Culpeper's (2011) Impoliteness Strategies.

First, STAGE 1 it unfolds the impoliteness strategies used by Malaysians on social media that causes social face damage. Second, STAGE 2 it ascertains the realization of impoliteness in the language used by Malaysians.

The data is analysed and presented in this section to inform readers on one of the main reasons why this incident has become such a racial frenzy (impoliteness strategies and language used) and also to give an insight to readers who link the present Low Yat Plaza incident with history.

### 4.1 Impoliteness Strategies Used by Malaysians on Social Media Comments

There are a total of 123 occurrences of impoliteness from both videos using Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness framework. Video 1 (N=74) has considerably higher frequency of occurrence than and Video 2 (N=47). This is the case because video 1 has a total of 895 comments and video 2 has 629 comments from YouTube users. Only comments that adhered to Culpeper's (2011) Impoliteness Strategies typology of conventionalized impolite formulae are used and all comments that are in *Bahasa Malaysia* are disregarded.

The impoliteness strategies used by YouTube users in their comments based on Culpeper's Impoliteness Strategies (2011) are highlighted in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Frequency of Impoliteness Strategies

<b>Impoliteness Strategy</b>	<b>Frequency (N=) Video 1</b>	<b>Frequency (N=) Video 2</b>	<b>Total (N=)</b>
Insults	32	25	57
Threats	19	9	28
Negative expressions (Curses and ill-wishes)	12	9	21
Challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions	10	5	15
Dismissals	7	5	12
Pointed criticism/complaints	4	6	10
Message enforcer	3	3	6
Silencers	1	1	2
Condescension	1	0	1
<b>Total Instances</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>152</b>

As can be seen in Table 4.1, the most frequent strategy used by YouTube users in this study is insults (N= 57), followed by threats (N=28), and negative expressions (curses and ill-wishes) (N=21), challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions (N=15), dismissals (N=12), pointed criticism/complaints (N=10), message enforcers (N=6), silencers (N=2), and condescension (N=1). It appears that insults are the most often used impoliteness strategy because Condescension, on the hand, is the least with only one occurrence.

#### 4.1.2 Insults

Each of the categories of Insults is used in varying frequencies (N=57) throughout the data as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Categories of Insults

Categories of insults	Frequency (N=)
Personalized third-person negative reference in the hearing of the target (Category 4)	20
Other Strategies of Insults	12
Personalized negative assertions (Category 2)	9
Personalized negative vocatives (Category 1)	6
Personalized negative reference (Category 3)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>

Amongst the four categories of Insults as presented by Culpeper (2011) Personalized third-person negative reference in the hearing of the target (Category 4) is used most frequently (N=20). This is followed by other categories of insults (N=12), Personalized negative assertions (N=9) and Personalized negative vocatives (N=6). No occurrence of Personalized negative reference (Category 3) was found in the data (N=0).

##### 4.1.2.1 Personalized Third-Person Negative Reference in the Hearing of the Target (Category 4)

From Table 4.2, the most frequent category (N=20) used by YouTube users is personalized third-person negative reference in the hearing of the target (Category 4). This strategy is marked with its usage of negative references such as ‘pig’ ‘dog’ ‘bimbo’ and ‘monkey’ which is written from the third person point of view.

Example 1

...I'm seeing how stupid the **Chinese monkeys** are (Eyzul XOX-INS4)

Example 2

**Chinese** is just like a **nasty garbage** (Zack-INS4)

Example 3

ahahaha **Malay muslims** are **stupid like pigs** (Bennett-INS4)

Example 4

I hate the **Malay** like **pig dogs!** (Joker ultra Malaya-INS4)

Example 5

Malays are like the **devils**. Descendants of the **dogs** (Florence-INS4)

In Example 1, 3, 4 and 5, the comments entail references to animals, which carry various negative connotations. In the Malaysian contexts, when one is associated with animals it is often regarded as derogatory for example, when a person is called a 'pig' it symbolizes stupidity, laziness and dirty beings as pigs harbour a range of diseases and parasites that can be easily transmitted to humans. Monkeys are often associated with nuisance, filth and clumsiness and it is an animal which is generally disliked by the public. The Muslim community is refrained from consuming pork or touching dogs as part of their religious belief however, this belief is mocked by the users by using it to describe them as a means of provocation (see Examples 3-5). In Examples 1 - 5, with terms such as 'Malay' and 'Chinese', speakers are communicating face-attack intentionally by creating race based insults with the use of phrases such as 'stupid like pigs' and 'nasty garbage'.

It is observed that there are many instances in which Category 4 is used together with a different impoliteness strategy. In doing so, the comments appear to be more face-

aggravating and harsh. This is in line with Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichman (2003) whom reported impoliteness does not simply arise from one particular strategy but can be used in combination with other strategies, termed multiple strategies.

Example 6

**fuck you** chinese **dapig!!!**

(Joker ultra malaya- INS4/NE)

In Example 6, Category 4 insult is used with a negative expression 'fuck you'. The use of the negative expression strategy heightens the impact of the insult to the 'Chinese pig'.

Example 7

**Come here son**, I shove the pork up to your Malay ass, **stupid pig**

(NIU 牛- TH/INS4)

Similarly, in Example 7 the use of two strategies in a single sentence is a way to amplify an insult. The user, once more used the negative reference of 'stupid pig' to address the Malays. The user is also posing a threat and a challenge to the hearer by commanding them to 'come here'.

In sum, personalized third-person negative reference in the hearing of the target (Category 4) is seen used most often to describe the Chinese and Malays respectively as animals. This is an impolite form of utterance from the perspective of hearers as it downgrades them by mocking their existence as capable and highly functional human beings.



#### 4.1.2.2 Personalized Negative Assertion (Category 2)

Personalized negative assertion (N=9) is the third most frequently used category (see Table 4.2). This category is identified with the use of words such as ‘shit’, ‘stupid’ and ‘hopeless’.

Example 8

MALAY PEOPLE ARE SUCH SAVAGES, UGLY AND STUPID

(thesuperproify-INS2/INS4)

Example 9

You are uneducated Malay **shit**...

(Alicia-INS2)

Example 10

Malays are really **stupid**. Don't use their brains

(arif ashraf- INS2)

Example 11

Chinese people are **stupid** but malay people are the good one

(aisar yusri-INS2)

YouTube users in Examples 8-11 used expressive words such as, ‘savage’, ‘ugly’ ‘stupid’ and ‘shit’ in their comments to blatantly to describe the Malay and the Chinese. In Example 8, *thesuperproify* demands attention and authority with the use of capital letter in his or her comment. The most commonly used word is ‘stupid’ as seen used repeatedly in Examples 8, 10 and 11. A Category 2 insult is also used with other impolite strategies in comments as shown in the following examples.

Example 12

Chinese and Malay are both **stupid...go die!**

(azhar chin- INS2/DS)

The comment in Example 12 consist of a Category 2 insult and the impoliteness strategy, ‘dismissal’ with the use of the phrase ‘go die’ which seems as a tactic to add fuel to the

insult. The following example reveals the use of a Category 2 insult with personalized third-person negative reference in the hearing of the target (Category 4).

Example 13

Malays are all **stupid!** Like **pigs** (Ray Washington- INS2/INS4)

In Example 13, the Malays are described as stupid (Category 4) and the user also made a negative reference to pigs to further emphasize stupidity.

In sum, findings on Impoliteness Strategies suggests that personalized negative assertions especially the word ‘stupid’ is used to look down on hearers and for interlocutors to show that they are far more superior and worthy. The *Merriam-Webster* defines stupid as “not intelligent: having or showing a lack of ability to learn and understand things” however, it seems that these interlocutors are using the word stupid profusely without purpose.

#### 4.1.2.3 Personalized Negative Vocatives (Category 1)

Personalized Negative Vocatives (N=6) is one of the least used categories. The comments which used the strategy of name calling are depicted in the following examples.

Example 14

You Malays are all **fucking racist!!!** (King Ify-INS1)

Example 15

You **bastard** stole (Vincent Kim-INS1)

In Example 14 and 15, the YouTube users used the word ‘racist’ and ‘bastard’ to provoke the hearer. The comment in Example 14 however is more face-threatening than the latter

because he directed his comments to the Malays. While Example 15, refrained from involving any direct address in his comment.

Example 16

To hell you Chinese **bastards!** (khairuddin rosle –INS1)

Example 17

You (Malays) **fucking low race.** (thesuperproify-INS1)

Example 16 and 17 used ‘bastard’ and ‘low race’ in their comment respectively. The phrase ‘low race’ is considered a name-calling tactic as it is dire as calling someone a ‘bastard’ or a ‘moron’. In Malaysia, the term ‘low race’ is associated with many negative connotations and thus, it is an extremely impolite comment (see Section 1.0). As a nation who has progressed tremendously, socially and economically with significant contribution from each race, it is definitely an ignorant comment to associate anyone (Example 17) with social classes.

Example 18

You **loser** chinese...**fuck u...** (Mad Boy –INS1/NE)

In Example 18, the strategy of negative expression “fuck you” is used with Category 1 insult, “loser”. According to Culpeper (2011), a negative expression is a strategy used to desire ill-wishes and curses upon someone.

In sum, it is important to note that, vocatives are words and phrases used to address hearers very impolitely as seen in examples presented in this section. Words such as ‘bastard’ and ‘racist’ are used deliberately to intentionally cause offense to the hearer and in this context,

cause racial tension because of interlocutors' direct address to the specific race as seen in Example 14, 16, 17 and 18.

#### 4.1.2.4 Other Strategies of Insults

There are also other insults (N=12) found in the study which do not belong under any of the categories developed by Culpeper's (2011) Impoliteness model. This seem to suggest that Culpeper's (2011) framework cannot be replicated wholly as it is to the Asian context especially in this study that analyses the Low Yat Plaza incident. These insults are further examined for emerging patterns and are divided into three categories as seen in Table 4.3

Table 4.3: Other Strategies of Insults

Strategies of Insults	Frequency (N=)
Accusation and baseless claims	5
To show superiority	4
To ridicule the other	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>

##### a. Accusation and Baseless Claims

The following insults are based on accusations and baseless claims that cannot be proven viable otherwise.

Example 19

**Uncivilised** malay..this is what happen when **majority low IQ** rule the country  
(Cayden Ang –INS)

Example 20

Chinese people are **more intelligent** than the Malays! **It is true!**  
(Science L-INS)

Example 21

The Chinese are **rich from all the fraud.** (Shafii Yanti-INS)

Example 22

In all business, chinese **do cheat people that's why they are rich**  
(Michael Beltazar-INS)

In Example 19 the user is insulting the ruling government by implying that they are stupid and then further accusing their “low IQ” as the cause of the Low Yat Plaza incident even when it is known that the incident was instigated by irresponsible laymen and not by the government as indicated by *Cayden Ang*. Likewise, in Example 21 and 22, the Chinese are being accused of gaining their riches from cheating in businesses but is not supported by any information or proven facts, it is merely a claim by irresponsible interlocutors. These accusations and claims are used as an insult strategy to provoke hearers for a reaction and as seen in Examples 19-20, the users are seen aggravating Malays by devaluing their intelligence. Both Examples 21-22 show how the Chinese are being provoked by accusing them of being liars.

#### **b. To Show Superiority**

Example 23

**CHINESE ARE ALWAYS SUPERIOR TO MALAYSHIT**  
(thesuperproify-INS)

Example 24

You Chinese are only **immigrants** (Shah Shahi-INS)

Example 25

You chinese people will be **exterminated like pests**  
(Anonymous Person-INS)

The user in Example 23 clearly demands attentions with the use of capital letters in the comment and the user wants his or her message of Chinese superiority to come across loud and clear to all users. Example 24 is intended to make the Chinese feel inferior though it is a known that the Chinese community is in fact rightful citizens of Malaysia though they were initially brought into the country as immigrants in the past century by the British Archipelago for work purposes. Similarly, comments such as “exterminating the Chinese like pest” is seen as an act to show dominance and power (see Example 25) because the act of eliminating and destroying someone can only be done by someone who believes that he or she has an upper-hand over the other.

### c. To Ridicule the Other

The current study finds interlocutors using the strategy of ridiculing to make fun of the target through scornful jocularity.

Example 26

The Malays have **no brain**

(IM Danish-INS)

Example 27

Consuming Halal food **diminishes their brains to pea size**

(Cliff Hanger-INS)

In Examples 26 and 27, the Malays are a subject of contemptuous and dismissive language from these hearers. Examples 26 and 27 are implying that the Malays are stupid and user, *Cliff Hanger* is ridiculing the sacred religious teachings of the Muslims to only consume halal food as part of their belief. This strategy of insult also exerts that both users (in Example 26 and 27) deem themselves more intelligent than the Malays and because of that, it is acceptable to ridicule the intelligence of others.

To sum up, all seven categories of insults; *personalized third-person negative reference in the hearing of the target, personalized negative assertions, personalized negative vocatives, personalized negative reference, accusation and baseless claims, to show superiority and to ridicule the other*, presented in this section show that these categories are mostly used to provoke the hearer and to get a reaction. The most used category of insult is ‘Personalized third-person negative reference in the hearing of the target’ (N=20) while the least used category is ‘Personalized negative vocatives’ (N=6). In the current data, no instances of ‘Personalized negative reference’ (Category 3) were found in the comments.

#### 4.1.2 Threats

The second mostly used impoliteness strategy found in the data are threats (N=19) which are used as a statement of intention to inflict injury, pain and damage (see Table 4.2 p.60). The occurrences of threats in the data are conceptualized directly and indirectly by the YouTube users. Direct threats are presented in the following examples.

Example 28

JIBAI I AM SO GETTING PUMP UP TO **KILL** MALAYS!!!!

(wasabi LOL-TH)

Example 29

WE **REVENGE** AND COME TO YOU!!!!

(Fariz Zec-TH)

In Example 28 and 29, the words ‘kill’ and ‘revenge’ acts a direct threat to the hearer. Both users are also avenging the fight that broke out between the Malays and Chinese during the Low Yat Plaza incident. Furthermore, the use of the capital letters draws attention and the repeated exclamation marks seen in both comments reflect anger and raging emotions of the interlocutors which suggests that the users are aggravated. The use of the capital letters

here also can be triggered by the stress faced especially when dealing with a provocative issue such as the Low Yat incident.

Example 30

If I was there, I'll be the first to **smash** those chinese in the face  
(Muhd Aiwad Bin Azman-TH)

Example 31

Let's **smash** the shop owner's face (Muhammadkamil-TH)

Example 32

Those cibais should steal from indians in buntong. See if their head will be **smashed**

(Looes74-TH/ME)

The common threat seen in Examples 30, 31, and 32 is the use of the word 'smash'. The users' remark on smashing the hearer's face and head is a serious threat and a direct face-threatening act especially when Malaysians are perceived and expected to be accommodating to others. In Example 42, *Looes* is indirectly threatening the Chinese and Malays when he warned against anyone who dares to steal from the Indians in "Buntong" which seems rather puzzling especially because the Low Yat incident does not involve the Indian community thus violating Grice's Cooperative Principle in which participants are expected to make conversational contribution only as it is required. In this case, the user is commenting to simply add to the fury and wants to further aggravate both races unnecessarily.

It is also observed that interlocutors use the issue of the May 13<sup>th</sup> incident (see Section 1.0) which is also a form of indirect threat to hearers as seen in the following examples. Threats are an impolite form of utterance because it threatens the face of hearers and ultimately damages their social face that demands respect especially in public social spaces.



Example 33

You want **May 13** to repeat again!

(fareez asham-TH)

Example 34

**13<sup>th</sup> May** will come again soon. Just wait and see!

(officialjulianabeautyenterprise-TH)

Example 35

*Sohai* [asshole in Cantonese] Chinese pigs, we will repeat **13<sup>th</sup> May** if you want!  
Come!

(Muhammad Fairouz-TH)

Example 36

**Remember 13<sup>th</sup> May?** We won the war **fucker**. **Dare to repeat?** You gonna see your relative all headless if you don't how to be grateful. **You fucking *sepet*** [slit and narrow eyes].

(Muhammad Fairouz-ME/TH/INS)

In Examples 33 - 36, the interlocutors use the highly sensitive issue of May 13<sup>th</sup> 1969 as a threat to hearers. By warning the repeat of such an incident, the users intend is to intimate the hearers and instil fear that should this issue worsen, they will instigate another racial riot.

In Example 36, the phrase “remember 13<sup>th</sup> May?” is used as a message enforcer and acts as a preface of the sentence. The phrase serves as a reminder to hearers of the success of the riot and warns that it might happen again if they pursue (threat). He also enforced that “*we won the war*” which suggests the show of power and dominance over the Chinese and wanting to remind the community that the Malays can easily repeat their victory once more if such a riot should happen again . The user also ridiculed the Chinese by commenting on their “*sepet*” eyes, which is an impolite remark used to describe the Chinese in Malaysia.

Example 37

**Let us show** who the **Malays** are

(Riyan Najwa-TH)

Example 38

**Don't test the patience** of the **Malays**

(Siti Ramlah-TH)

Examples 37 and 38 are indirect threats because there are no specific words used as listed by Culpeper (2011) in his list of Impoliteness Strategies but it still falls under this category as the comment entails clear instances of impoliteness as the interlocutors choose to purposely provoke the Chinese by suggesting that they are weak against the Malays. In both examples above, the hearer *Riyan Najwa* and *Siti Ramlah* warned not to invoke the Malays as they will strike whomever that crosses their boundaries.

Threats are used with warnings to intimidate hearers and to show dominance over a certain group. The use of the capital letters here (Example 28 and 29) reflects stress and anger as a result of provocation which differs from Example 8 and Example 23 in which those users are merely using capital letters to seek attention. The users also repeatedly referenced the May 13<sup>th</sup> incident to remind hearers of the consequences of the issue if pursued any further.

#### **4.1.3 Negative Expressions (Curses and ill-wishes)**

Negative expressions are the third most used impoliteness strategy (N=21) (see Table 4.2 p.60). A research by Dynel (2012) suggests that negative expressions when not used in an abusive context can be a tool to build camaraderie especially with the younger generation. As such, it is important that these negative expressions are studied in the context they are presented in.

Example 39  
**Fuck** the chinese...they are racist (adli daiki-NE)

Example 40  
**Fuck u...**chinese (Mad Boy-NE)

Example 41  
To fellow malay, **go fucking hang yourselves.** (Li Ang-NE)

Example 42  
Religion has nothing to do with this topic **damn you fucking pig**  
(Zack Hakim-NE)

Example 43  
**Damn you** Malays! (mynameisgoof-NE)

As seen in Example 39-42, the most commonly used curse word by these YouTube users is ‘fuck’ and its representation (fucking). In Example 41, *Li Ang* even used a directive (*to go*) to show authoritative power. The single exclamation used in Example 43 suggests that the speech represents something spoken very loudly or shouted with resentment. The curses “*fuck you*”, “*fucking...*” and “*damn you*” are used to intentionally offend and show frustration.

Example 44  
**Kill** the Chinese (Mbah Dukun-NE/TH)

Example 44 illustrates an instance of ill-wish, in which *Mbah Dukun* clearly shows when the user expresses his malicious intention to “kill the Chinese”. The example above can also be categorized as a threat.

Example 45  
Malays bloody **dumbfuck** (赤王- NE)

Example 46

Muslim scum should be **vanished** in the surface of earth ur one of them. **Hope u die** in the halocaust.

(Bennet Tan-NE)

In Example 45, the slang ‘*dumbfuck*’ is mostly used by young people to refer to an extremely stupid or idiotic person and in this particular comment; the user was referring to the Malays. Example 46 shows extreme anger towards the Malays with the user wishing death upon them.

Example 47

I wan to **punch** those monkeys right into their **hopeless** face. **Fuck you** all

(penangguyolnaes-TH/INS2/NE)

Example 47 consists of three impoliteness strategies; threats, Category 2 (personalized negative assertions) insult and negative expressions. The user also posed a threat to the hearers by threatening to “*punch their hopeless face*” though it is unclear who the user is particularly referring to. Category 2 (personalized negative assertions) is observed in the comment as well as the user is asserting that the hearers are “*hopeless*”. The use of all three strategies intensifies the comment as it might incite a greater reaction from interlocutors.

Example 48

The ‘C’ really are **cibai**

(Eyzul XOX-NE)

The word ‘*Cibai*’ in Example 48 is a Chinese dialect (specifically, Hokkien) term for female genitals. It is a very vulgar and offensive word to be used to describe others as it shows disrespect to women.

In sum, the use of negative expressions such as “*fuck you*”, “*damn you*” and “*dumbfuck*” are considered very impolite for Malaysians as they are raised in a society that takes great offence when such words are used against them. With the use of these negative expressions, it is evident that in society today, Malaysians fail to ensure that their speech is politely constructed to be well received as once reported by Ali (2000). It appears that interlocutors use this impolite strategy to cause offense intentionally and cause disparity to the harmonious balance.

#### 4.1.4 Challenging or Unpalatable Questions and/or Presuppositions

Challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions (N=15) consists of open ended questions for a few literary effects such as to add fuel, to provoke and to challenge (see Table 4.2 p.60).

Example 49

**Is this** what Islam teaches you?

(Marian Gonzales-CH)

Example 50

**Is this** what you call Malay? WAKAKAKA

(Un Watch-CH)

Example 51

**Is this** how true Muslim the way of talking and behave?! **Is this** reflect peace?

(CJ-CH)

In Example 49-51, the intended message behind the comments is to provoke the Malays and Muslim interlocutors. For instance, in Example 50, *Un Watch* is trying to aggravate them by questioning if fighting is what constituents being a Malay and by adding a laugh at the end of the comment, the user is trying to add fuel to what has been said earlier. In Example 51, the user is provoking Muslims who do practice peace and harmony as part of their teaching by generalizing the actions of a few to the entire community. These examples

indicate that the interlocutors are not only impolite in commenting about religion which is a taboo topic in Malaysia, they are also deliberately pointing fingers to a particular religion to practice blame shifting, a tactic to push fault entirely to another person(s). Another observation made is that, these Examples are clearly violating Grice's maxims of quality because what the users are claiming may be false.

Example 50

The police officer is a display unit?

(Joy Joy-CH)

Example 52

**Is this how** we Malaysian show to the world how uncivilized we are?

(AliceTan-CH)

Example 53

So the malay **gangsters** were only good for watching?

(Ken Lighting-CH)

Similarly, in Example 50-53, these open ended questions are also a tool of provocation. *Joy Joy* is trying to challenge the police and signifying that they did not do anything to stop the fight (see Example 50) when in true fact, the police officers at the scene were greatly outnumbered by the angry public. In Example 53, the user is provoking the Malays further by referencing them to "*gangsters*" and then suggesting that they too did not do anything to break the fight with the expression '*only good for watching*'. However user *Ken Lighting* refrained from commenting on the other races that were also among the crowd as seen in both videos.

It is apparent that the strategy of challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions is used on its own without any other impoliteness strategy which suggests that the use of this particular strategy alone causes enough damage to one's social face.

This strategy is seen to be used as open-ended questions to not only provoke hearers but to add fuel and challenge them.

#### 4.1.5 Pointed Criticism/Complaints and Dismissals

Pointed criticism/complaints (N=10) and dismissals (N=12) are found to be used quite often by users (see Table 4.2 p.60). The criticism and complaints observed are presented in the following examples.

Example 54

**This** is what I call **absolutely** stupid Malay pigs (roslan rostam-PC)

Example 55

**That** is the immature and **rubbish** teaching of Nabi Muhammad  
(casval char-PC)

Example 56

**This** will not happen if wasn't because of the stingy malay who stole the phone...  
(yang yang-PC)

In Example 54-56, the criticism and complaints are addressed directly to the Malays. In Example 54, the Malays are criticized to be stupid like the pigs while in Example 55, *casval char* openly criticised the teaching of Prophet *Muhammad* and suggested that the Behaviour exhibited by the Malays in the Low Yat Plaza incident is encouraged by His teachings. In Malaysia, to criticize the teachings and beliefs of another religion is greatly discouraged since it may cause a racial turmoil. The harmonious balance in Malaysia is guarded by following conventions such as this, to not criticize another religion to foster group solidarity. Without these conventions, there would be chaos in the system as reported by Bousfied (2008).

In Example 56, the user complains that the Malays were the cause of the entire incident. The pattern seen in Examples 54-56 suggests that interlocutors use this strategy to blame and to put others down. As seen in the previous category (Challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions) interlocutors use this strategy to practice blame shifting as well which is particularly clear in Example 56, when *yang yang* blamed the Malay man of instigating the fight. However, in truth the Low Yat Plaza incident is the result of involvement of multiple people from different races, which have made this into an unnecessary racial frenzy.

Example 57

Chinese **go back** and eat pork! (syafiq adha-DS)

Example 58

Chinese **out** of this country!!! (Malayneum-DS)

In Example 57 and 58, the users are both dismissing the Chinese and these suggest that their opinion and presence is not needed nor valued. As seen in Example 58, *Malaynuem* is commanding them to leave the country and the use of exclamation mark here is to be loud and to show anger.

Example 59

**Fuck** the Chinese. These chinese bastards should **go back** to mainland china  
(adli daiki-NE/DS)

Example 60

**Fuck off** Chinese. Let us show who the Malay are  
(Riyan Najwa Xxx Riyan-DS/TH)

Example 59 consists of two strategies; negative expression and dismissals. The negative expression here is marked by the curse word, '*fuck*'. *adli daiki* in Example 59 too is



dismissing the Chinese back to the land of their origin. In Example 60, the user makes a threat to the Chinese to be weary of the Malays to show dominance.

Example 61

**This** is such a stupid thing! Chinese came to Malaysia and **make shit. Go back** to China la you **pigs**

(Uchiha Lucifer-PC/INS/DS/INS4)

Example 61 uses four impoliteness strategies; pointed complaints/criticism, two categories of insult (accusations and personalized third-person negative reference in the hearing of the target) and dismissal. The example illustrates pointed complaints/criticism when user complains about the stupidity of the whole incident. The user also makes an accusation and baseless claim when the user claims that the Chinese is of no use to the country when in fact, the Chinese do contribute significantly to the country's economic growth. The user goes on dismissing the Chinese community to "go back to China" and referencing them to *pigs* to suggest stupidity.

In an incident as reported by *MalayMail Online* on July 31<sup>st</sup> 2013, Yati Dani, the principal of SMK Alam Megah faced backlash from the public when she told Chinese and Indian students of the school to "*balik Cina, balik India*" (go back to China and to India) in an outburst. The issue was dismissed as a case of "*melatah*" (a spontaneous reaction) as she was faced with unruly behaviour of the hundreds of children before her. But the words used do show some "racism" at the back of the mind. The real issue here is Malaysians are aware these words are impolite and are insulting to other races but still choose to use it as a tool to provoke.

The strategy of pointed criticism/complains in the data is seen used to shift the blame on others and also to let the other race down. The most common use of ‘Dismissals’ is to command the Chinese to ‘*go back*’ which suggest that the users are disregarding the Chinese and are ignoring their significant contribution thus far to the country. As mentioned by Ali (2000); Soo et al (2011); Omar (1982, 1993) Malaysians focus on living harmoniously with various ethnics and races and thus, to dismiss a certain group and disregard their importance to the country is certainly an impolite act.

#### 4.1.6 Message Enforcers, Condescension and Silencers

The final three strategies, message enforcers (N=6) silencers (N=2), and condescension (N=1), are the least used strategies found in the data (see Table 4.2 p.60). The following examples demonstrate the use of these strategies in the comments found.

Example 62

THIS IS **NOT** YOUR FUCKING COUNTRY CHINESE

(ahmad fuad isnin-ME)

Example 63

This is Tanah Melayu...**don’t forget**

(Shafii Yanti-ME)

Example 64

This is **our** race, **our** religion, **our** land, **our** blood. Malays will never be extinguished from earth

(Nurhajar Abdullah-ME)

The use of message enforcers as an impoliteness strategy is seen clearly in Examples 62-64. YouTube user, *ahmad fuad* (Example 62) extended the face-threatening act of his message by commenting in capital letters which means that the user wants to be loud and wants

interlocutors to pay attention to the comment as our eyes are immediately drawn to something out of the norm.

In Examples 63 and 64, both users want to remind hearers that the Malays are the more dominant race and with the repeated use of the possessive pronoun ‘*our*’ (see Example 64) *NurHajar Abdullah* wants hearers to be reminded of Malay dominance which again defies what past researchers (Lailawati Mohd Salleh, 2006; Ali 2000) has reported on the Malay community’s communicative Behaviour (see Section 2.3). It also deviates from the study by Rourke et al. (2001) that suggests that the use of pronouns such as ‘*our*’ denotes feelings of closeness among participants in CMC.

Example 65

**Remember**, this is tanah MELAYU bitch! (Trouble Maker-ME)

Example 66

**This is MALAYSia** and begin with Tanah MELAYU... so respect Malay  
(Ameerul Amin-ME)

Example 67

TANAH MELAYU **REMEMBER THAT...**PENDATANG ASING LIKE YOU  
ALL **SHUT UP**  
(puteri arvyanna-ME/SL)

Similarly, in Example 66 and 67 users continue to demonstrate Malay possessiveness over the country by disregarding other races. As mentioned earlier, the use of exclamation mark suggests that the user wants to be loud in his or her remark (see Example 65). The use of capital letters in Example 66 however differs from the one explained in previous sections because in this comment, it is used as a stress mark to re-enforce certain point such as “*Malay*” and “*Melayu*”. In Example 67, the comment consists of the strategy of ‘message

enforcer' and 'silencer' (shut up) and the capital letters here similar to other examples in previous sections suggesting attention seeking.

Example 68

**Shut up** you **disgusting** terrorist **pig** (Sdaa Desgsdewgh-SL/INS1)

In Example 68, the strategy of *silencer* (shut up) is used with *personalized negative vocatives* (disgusting pig). *Condescension* is the last strategy (N=1) and is used to show superiority. Example 69 shows the strategy of condescension in a comment by a YouTube user.

Example 69

So **childish** as fuck (Azie Freezy-CON)

In summary, in the strategy of '*message enforcer*' the common pattern found is that users want to show dominance and authoritative power of one race over the other with repeated mention that '*this is Tanah Melayu*' (see Section 1.0). *Silencers* are used to disregard one's opinion and *condescension* is used by the interlocutor so show that he is above such an act.

#### 4.2 Realization of Impoliteness in the Language Used

In previous sections, the use of impoliteness strategies according to Culpeper's (2011) model has been highlighted to inform readers of the occurrence of these strategies in the Malaysian setting. Section 4.3 presents the manner in which impoliteness is realized in the language used by Malaysians. Table 4.4 illustrates the realization of impoliteness in the language used by YouTube users.

Table 4.4: Frequency of Linguistic Device

Realization of Language Use	Frequency (N=) Video 1	Frequency (N=) Video 2	Total (N=)
<b>Grammatical Realization</b>			
Profanities	23	15	38
Interjections	14	9	23
Imperatives	14	4	18
Adjectives	11	5	16
Similes	6	4	10
<b>Total Instances</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Impolite talk</b>			
Taboo topics	13	6	19
Sarcasm	2	1	18
<b>Total Instances</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>37</b>

The realization of language use can be categorized into two; namely, grammatical realization and impolite talk. Grammatical realization can be further categorized into five categories; profanities, interjections, imperatives, adjectives and similes. Impolite talk is divided into three categories; taboo topics, racial remarks and sarcasm. The most used device is profanities (N=38) followed by interjections (N=23), taboo topics (N=19), imperatives (N=18) and sarcasm (N=18) adjectives (N=16) and similes (N=10).

#### 4.3.1 Grammatical Realization

Grammatical realization is found in varying frequencies (N=105) throughout the data. The various grammatical realizations are used to further intensify an impolite comment.

##### 4.3.1.1 Profanities

Profanities is the most used grammatical device found in the data (N=38) (see Table 4.4 p.83). It is identified with the use of strong abusive words such as “*fuck you*”, “*bastard*” and localized vulgar words.

- Example 70  
you **fucking idiot** malay (tydess-PRO)
- Example 71  
to hell you chinese **bastards** (Khairuddin Rosle-PRO)
- Example 72  
You Malays are all **fucking racist!!!** (King Ify-PRO/INT)

In Example 70 and 71, foul words such as “*fucking idiot*” and “*bastards*” are used to mark profane language. Interjections are also used in the form of exclamation marks to show anger and irritation towards the Malays such *fucking racist!!!* in Example 72. These words are used by interlocutors to express frustration, disrespect and raging anger to the fellow Chinese and Malay community. Other than that, interlocutors use these foul words freely because of the freedom to remain anonymous and to have their real identity hidden from the public and this gives rise to the use of profanities due to the lack of repercussion.

Example 73  
All malays need to know that chinese are ‘*lancau*’ (Syafiq Adha-PRO)

Example 74  
The Malays are *cibai*! (Hong Tye-PRO)

Example 75  
*Sohai* Chinese pigs (Muhammad Fairouz-PRO)

The word “*lancau*” and “*cibai*” (see Examples 73 and 74) are both Hokkien words which mean male and female genitals respectively and are used especially by the younger generation. It is a highly vulgar word that shows extreme disrespect when used to describe the other. “*Sohai*” is a Cantonese word which means ‘stupid idiot’ or ‘asshole’ (see Example 75) and is used to disrespect the Chinese. YouTube users succumb to these local vulgar words to create an identity for themselves as Malaysians and also to personalize the

comment. Another reason for the use of local profanities is the desire for control because when interlocutors use words such as ‘*sohai*’ and ‘*lancau*’ they are creating a specific audience and asserting control over whom it is meant for and in this case, the comments are meant to be understood by Malaysians specifically and not any other foreigners as they would not understand what it entails.

#### 4.3.1.2 Interjections

Interjections are the second most used grammatical device in the data (N=23) (see Table 4.4 p.83) and it is used most commonly in the current data to exclaim and to show raging emotions of anger.

Example 76

Let's **smash** the shop owner's face!!! (Muhamadkamil-INT)

Example 77

I WILL NEVER RESPECT MALAY PIG SCUM!!!! (Sdaa Desgsdewgh-INT)

Example 78

This calls for revenge!!! (Zam thekop – INT)

In Example 76-78, the users are clearly feeling angry and with the repeated use of the exclamation mark, they are able to convey the same emotions of rage in their comment to other interlocutors.

Example 79

**Damn you** Malays! (mynameisgoof-INT)

Example 80

**WTHELL!!** These chinese bastards are out of line! (agr2000-INT/PRO)

'Damn you' is an expression on its own that is enough to suggest to hearers that the user is not happy and is angered by the actions of the Malays in the Low Yat Plaza incident (see Example 79). In Example 80, 'WTHELL!!' is slang which otherwise means in Standard English as 'what the hell' and it shows that the user is in disbelief over what he or she has just witnessed. It is clear that with the use of interjections (exclamation marks), users are able express themselves in as little information as possible as such, presenting hearers exactly what they are aiming to project which is anger and frustration.

#### 4.3.1.3 Imperatives

Imperatives are used in the data significantly (N=18) to command and order hearers (see Table 4.4 p.83).

Example 81  
If you dare **come, stupid!** (Tanesan tanes-IMP/PRO)

Example 82  
**come** here son, I shove the pork up to your Malay ass  
(NIU 牛-IMP)

In Example 81-82, it can be seen that both users are commanding hearers to *come* as they consider themselves to be in a more superior position than the other users for them to be able to give a command as such.

Example 83  
**Burn** Low yat (haikal taker-IMP)

Example 84  
**Kill** all the Malays. (Tearsoflove21-IMP)

Example 85  
**Slaughter** all those Chinese. Make them extinct!  
(ahmad fuad isnin-IMP/INT)



Similarly in Example 83-85, the users use imperatives to give orders to interlocutors with the use of the word ‘*burn*’, ‘*kill*’ and ‘*slaughter*’. In Example 85, the addition of the interjection (exclamation mark) suggests anger. The interlocutors are able to use commanding language because of the lack of interpersonal relationship which is greatly reduced in online communication comments because all contact is through electronic devices as suggested by the theory of social presence. If these users were to establish a relationship with each other, then the use of commanding language which exerts superiority would clearly seem impolite.

#### 4.3.1.4 Adjectives

Adjectives are one of the most used grammatical devices found in the comments (N=16) and it is used by interlocutors to describe one another. The most commonly used adjective is ‘*stupid*’ (N=9) (see Table 4.4 p.83).

Example 85 This Chinese are so <b>stupid</b> .	(Nick Nick-ADJ)
Example 86 Chinese are <b>stupid</b>	(Aisar Yusri-ADJ)
Example 87 This is what I call absolutely <b>stupid</b> Malay pigs	(Roslan roslam-ADJ)
Example 88 I’m Malay and I’m seeing how <b>stupid</b> Malays are	(naim nasir-ADJ)

Examples 85-88 clearly show *stupid* being used as an adjective to describe the Chinese and Malay. *Stupid* is mostly used by the interlocutors rather than other stronger adjectives such as *moron* and *idiot* because it is more subtle though it does carry similar meaning. This is one of the features of Malaysia’s communication antics in which Malaysians try to

be indirect to lessen the impact of social face damage and this can be seen in the interlocutor's selection of adjective (see Section 2.3).

Example 89  
MALAY PEOPLE ARE **SAVAGES** (thesuperproify-ADJ)

Example 90  
You are a **yellow dog** = Chinese (Mbah Dukun-ADJ)

Example 91  
You **loser** Chinese (Mad Boy-ADJ)

In Examples 89-91, adjectives such as *savages*, *yellow dog* and *loser* is used to describe the Malay and Chinese and in turn, being disrespectful towards them. In Example 90, the term *yellow* is used to describe the Chinese in reference to their skin color and *Mbad Dukun* further called them '*dogs*' to intentionally offend them. In western cultures, a dog has more than one meaning, one being the animal and the other is a slang used particularly by young black men to describe a friend for example, 'What's up, dog?' however; in the Malaysian culture it is considered impolite because of all the negative connotation a stray dog carries which includes unwanted, ugly and dirty.

#### 4.3.1.5 Similes

Similes (N=10) are found used in the data to make a racial comparison between the Malay and Chinese with animals and other impolite remarks (see Table 4.4 p.83).

Example 98  
ahahaha Malay muslims are **stupid like pigs** (Bennett Tan-SIM)

Example 99  
Malays are **crazy as pigs** (Kuan Hock-SIM)

Example 100  
Malays are all **stupid like pigs**

(Ray Washington-SIM)

It is found that interlocutors used pigs (N=6) to compare most frequently (see Example 98-100) and this suggests that the hearer is stupid, dirty and stubborn as these are what pigs are known chiefly for.

Example 101  
Malays are like the **devils**.

(Florence Chan-SIM)

Example 102  
Chinese is just like a **nasty garbage**

(Zack Hakim-SIM)

In Example 101, *Florence Chan* made a comparison between the Malays and devils which implies that the users think that all Malays are cunning and evil beings. In Example 102, the Chinese are compared to *nasty garbage* and it carries negative meanings such as filth, unwanted and no longer useful. Interlocutors make these impolite comparisons between humans and *pigs*, *devils* and *garbage* because it helps reduce information overload as those words itself carry an implied meaning.

### 4.3.2 Impolite Talk

Impolite talk is a strategy used in varying frequencies throughout the data (N=37) mainly to cause racial provocation (see Table 4.4 p.83). This strategy is categorized into two strategies; taboo topics (N=19) and sarcasm (N=37)

#### 4.3.2.1 Taboo Topics

One of the approach found used in the data to cause impolite talk is the mention of taboo topics (N=19) such as the May 13<sup>th</sup> incident, education level and social status which are raised as racial provocation and to show dominance over the other. Since maintaining and

preserving a harmonious balance among all races is important to Malaysians (see Section 2.3), there are certain topics the public rather refrain from to maintain a harmonious balance.

Example 92

Remember **13<sup>th</sup> May**? We won the war fucker. (Muhammad Fairouz-TB)

Example 93

we will repeat **13<sup>th</sup> May** if you want! Come! (Muhd Saifuan-TB)

As mentioned previously (see Section 1.0), the May 13<sup>th</sup> incident caused major misunderstandings between the Chinese and Malay community and it took the government a long period to regain and establish the unity among the two races and thus, bringing up incidents of the past as seen in Example 92 and 93 is a form of racial provocation. Also, both interlocutors in Example 92 and 93 are implying that they could easily bring about another racial conflict which suggests the efforts undertaken by the government over the past years to bring about unity and harmony among the various races in Malaysia is thinly veiled.

Example 94

These chinese bastards should **go back to mainland china**.

(adli daiki-TB)

Example 95

**Go back to China** la you pigs

(Uchiha Lucifer-TB)

As Malaysia constitutes of at least three major community; Malays, Chinese and Indians, it is highly impolite and inappropriate to suggest either race to leave the country especially when it is legally documented in the form of birth certificates and national identity cards that Malaysia is home to the Chinese and Indians as much as it is to the Malays. It is a

taboo topic and such remarks as seen in Example 94 and Example 95 is a form of major provocation and marks the ignorance of both users to the feelings of the Chinese community who has contributed significantly to the country's growth over the years.

Example 96

Malays such **low educated** pathetic PARASITE in Malaysia.

(Lim Derrick-TB)

Example 97

**Uneducated** malay shit with **no brain!**

(Alicia-TB)

In Example 96-97, the remark on being *uneducated* remains a taboo since acknowledging races according to their academic capability is an issue of the past in which the Malays and Indians were seen not as capable as the Chinese who seem to have the upper hand, economically and academically (see Section 1.0)

#### 4.3.2.2 Sarcasm

Culpeper (1996) in his original framework of impoliteness built against the politeness strategies of Brown and Levinson (1987) includes 'sarcasm' in his model. As he claims, his understanding of sarcasm is close to Leech's (2016 p.82) conception of irony, namely:

If you cause offence, at least do so in a way which doesn't overtly conflict with the PP [Politeness Principle], but allows the hearer to arrive at the offensive point of your remark indirectly, by way of implicature.

At this juncture, it appears that Culpeper's understanding of sarcasm as a close synonym of irony, indicates an effort on the part of the speaker to withhold politeness (the absence of politeness work where it would be expected) a factor significant when accounting for his/her intentions.

In regards to realization of impoliteness in language used, sarcasm is the least used (N=18); and it is used by interlocutors to offend with satirical remarks (see Table 4.4 p.83)

Sarcasm may be used by these users as a passive aggressive way to indirectly assert anger and insult, especially when the user is aware that his or her remark may hurt the feelings of others. Furthermore, interlocutors may think that by using this indirect way of communication, their comments are less hurtful to the hearers. However, the utterance is merely a thinly veiled malicious attempt in attacking the hearer and it is regarded as an impolite form of speech.

Example 99

This is what police **top 60 ranking in the world** (Iv3000par-SAR)

Example 100

When chinese arrived in Malaysian..they found the Malay live on the tree. So **we call them Malay Monkey!!!** LOL (襄平西鹤-SAR)

Example 101

**Consuming Halal food diminishes their brains to pea size**  
(Cliff Hanger-SAR)

In Example 99, *Iv3000par* is clearly mocking the police force by suggesting that they are incompetent and do not deserve to be “top 60 ranking in the world”. Similar strategy is also used by *Cliff Hanger* in Example 101 to poke fun at the Muslims and their religious belief to only consume Halal food.

It appears that grammatical realization provides interlocutors the tool to carry out impolite conversations in order to affect the social face of the hearers. Their lack of respect is clearly

shown by the use of profanities (*fuck you* and *cibai*). Interjections is used to show anger as seen in the use of repeated exclamation marks while Imperatives is used to give command and orders to show superiority. Adjectives is found as a tool to cause intentional offense with the use of words such as *stupid* and *bastard* and Similes is used to make rude comparison of the Malay and Chinese communities. Taboo topics and Sarcasm is intended to indirectly offend hearers with satirical remarks.

#### **4.4 Summary**

The findings reveal that Malaysians that commented on the Low Yat Plaza incident use the impoliteness strategy of Insult and Profanities most frequently to cause social face damage.

There are two factors that trigger impoliteness in the data of the study namely; anonymity and emotion.

According to Postmes, Spears and Lea (1998), anonymity in CMC gives interlocutors the freedom in giving their negative opinions. The fact that these online users need not reveal their true identity online, gives rise to impolite talk. In the findings, it can be clearly seen that the Malays and Chinese have repeatedly insulted each other to communicate face-attack intentionally. This is highly unlikely to happen in face to face communication as Haslam et.al (1998) mentioned that disagreement between groups become more evident in anonymous than in non-anonymous discussions. Postmes, Spears and Lea (1998) also noted that anonymity in CMC gives interlocutors the freedom in giving their negative opinion.

Anonymity also causes people to feel less identifiable thus, fear the consequences of their actions less (Reicher & Levine, 1994). 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. In the data collected, it can be clearly seen that most YouTube users register using fake user names such as "*Joker ultra Malaya*", "*thesuperproify*", "*Ray Washington*" and "*King Ify*".

Watts (2003) emphasized that besides factors such as power, distance and rank of interlocutors, the emotional relationship between the interlocutors, too, plays a vital role, to decide the direction of the interaction, either in cooperative or competitive climate. When applied negatively, these emotions can cause disagreement and flaming messages and ultimately lead to impolite comments. This holds true in the study since the comments on Low Yat Plaza incident had evoked negative emotions in the readers and caused them to respond impolitely.

The current study revealed that interlocutors that commented impolitely on the Low Yat Plaza incident are irritated and mostly discontented as seen with the repeated use of "fuck", "stupid" and exclamation marks that show raging emotions of anger. Similarly, Kienpointner (2008) indicate emotional arguments involving negative emotions such as fear and hate tend to be formulated in an impolite way. Kienpointner's (2008) findings concurs with the current study that finds when people are angry and dissatisfied, they tend to produce impolite talk and use inappropriate words to voice their anger



## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the impoliteness strategies and language used by YouTube users when commenting about the Low Yat Plaza incident. The chapter also presents implications of the current study and recommendations for future research.

### 5.1 Impoliteness Strategies Used in *YouTube* Social Media Comments

The findings reveal that Malaysians use the impoliteness strategy of Insult most frequently to cause social face damage. Impoliteness strategies are realized through the frequent use of profanities which assert feelings of anger and negative emotion about the incident thus causing racial tension.

One of the significant findings of this study is the emergence of additional three categories; namely accusation and baseless claims, to show superiority and to mock apart from those found in Culpeper's (2011) The most used impoliteness strategy is 'Insults' with reference to animals whereby users labelled interlocutors as 'pigs' and 'dogs'. This finding is different from recent studies by Penannen (2013) and Halim (2015), which showed that 'stupid' is the most common word used to insult.

Unlike Halim's (2015) study that indicates a high occurrence of condescension based on Facebook comments, the current study records only one such instance on the YouTube commentaries.

Facebook comments and the current study investigates comment from YouTube, two different types of social network site (see Section 2.6).

### **5.3 Impolite Language Used in *YouTube* Social Media Comments**

The realization of impoliteness in the language used by Malaysians in the current study occurs in two categories namely; grammatical realization and impolite talk. Grammatical realization can be further divided into five categories such as; profanities, interjections, imperatives and adjectives and similes. In reference to impolite talk, taboo topics and sarcasm appear to be used especially to aggravate the interlocutors further by the mention of sensitive topics. The highest use of grammatical realization is marked by profanities and sarcasm is the lowest (see Chapter 4, Table 4.4).

Analysis of the data revealed that Malaysians tend to be impolite especially in situations that does not require face to face interactions. This is due to of anonymity and the lack of social presence that invoked the use of impolite language and that made online communication to be much easier to be tainted with potential FTAs as suggested by Morand and Ocker (2003). This is also supported by Neurater-Kessels (2011) who suggests that the privilege to remain anonymous that is offered by CMC is the reason for impolite comments because users can hide their real identity.

Similarly, Dynel (2012) reported that there are a growing number of users who used abusive and swear words in YouTube because of the lack of repercussion. Likewise, Whiteman (2002) also claims that the inability to establish interpersonal relationships online in a short span of time also gives opportunity to freely criticize without feeling responsible of causing social face damage to the hearer.

### **5.3 Implications and Contributions of the Study**

It must be mentioned at the outset that any implications drawn from the findings of this investigation are made in the light of some limitations as discussed in the Chapter 1, Section 1.5. As the data used was confined to English, comments that were in other language such as *Bahasa Melayu* had to be disregarded though it might have been significant to the objective of the study.

This finding suggests that there still exists a strong sense of ethnocentrism among Malaysians. The relational styles as reported by Barton et al. (2006) is also observed in the current data in which he reports that the Chinese (*quanxi*) and Malays (*silaturahmi*) have unique relational styles that is observed in each culture. In the Examples, the Chinese and Malays flock together into their own races, defending their own against insults, threats and mockery. The Chinese do this to maintain long-term relationships and to develop high sense of trust associated with traditional family traits. The Malays, on the other hand, also tend to defend comrades of the same race because of their own traditional beliefs that emphasizes *silaturahmi*, which in Arabic means the strength of brotherhood or the bond of friendship with one another.

Since there is dearth of information on impoliteness strategies in YouTube social media comments, this study has shed some light on impoliteness strategies and the realization of impoliteness in the language used by Malaysians when discussing a racial social issue online. The study also draws attention to Malaysian communication antics in computer-mediated communication. In other words, knowledge of impoliteness strategies in social media comments can help readers communicate more effectively to ensure such an incident does not happen online. The findings are a testament to bad societal Behaviour which is

open to local and global netizens. If proper communication conventions are not observed, there would be chaos in the system and it may initiate racial tension.

Also, the findings remind the public of the fragile nature of human relationship which can be easily broken when Malaysian online communicators fail to observe and follow certain conventions such as being courteous in a conversation and respecting the views of others to maintain group solidarity and camaraderie among the various races. This study informs the public of these impoliteness strategies and ultimately helps Malaysians avoid unnecessary racial tension caused by impolite language.

Since anonymity is the main factor which gives rise to impoliteness comments, it can be reduced if YouTube's Community Guidelines (Section 2.6) includes the registration of the actual name of the user verified with their identity card and a profile picture. This is important to generate a more responsible and socially concern community. Further, it would curtail such rude Behaviour online and users would think twice when they post impolite comments since such vulgarity cannot be tolerated amongst polite society.

The significant findings of three new impoliteness strategies contribute to the existing theory and literature as it suggests a difference in the impoliteness communicative pattern of Malaysians and Culpeper's (2011) corpus of study. This finding is also applicable to the development of the impoliteness discourse when discussing social issues in Malaysia.

#### **5.4 Recommendation for Future Studies**

In view of incidents and public comments that reflect impolite interaction among Malaysians, it is recommended that the government and relevant authorities review the effectiveness of the “High Moral Values and Staying Polite Campaign” (*Kempen Budi Bahasa Budaya Kita dan Kempen Nilai Murni*). The current study indicates Malaysians use various impoliteness strategies such as insults and threats to deliberately hurt and mock each other and this further taints the country’s image. This Behaviour debunks claims that Malaysians are known to be a collective group of people who observe politeness in conversations and value harmonious relationships (Barton et al., 2006; Guinee, 2005). Researchers can further investigate the effectiveness of such national campaigns and get public opinion and its effectiveness to encourage unity and harmony among Malaysians.

Similarly, researchers may look at different social network sites such as Twitter and Instagram and compare the findings with the current study to establish patterns on Malaysian’s impoliteness strategies.

Since this study reports that impoliteness is indeed ubiquitous and relevant especially in today’s society, it is important to study how Malaysians can reduce impoliteness and exert the need for diplomacy and tolerance to maintain a harmonious balance. They can do so using the following strategies to increase impoliteness when they interact online; by using politeness markers, by showing interest in the view point of others, by being indirect when giving negative feedbacks and by giving reasons for disagreeing.

By being polite and courteous online, Malaysians would be noted to be courteous, respectful and tolerant of others and remain a polite society. The use of politeness markers

such as “you see”, “maybe” and “I think” can be used to softened a statement or a request. Furthermore, by showing interest in the view point of others, it demonstrates that the interlocutor respects the opinion of others though he or she may not agree.

Impolite online interactions can be greatly reduced if Malaysian online users can practice indirect speech in face to face interaction out of fear of hurting the hearer’s feelings and thus losing the harmonious balance. Accordingly, Malaysians should practice indirectness to a certain degree in their online interaction to maintain camaraderie with other social interactants especially when disagreeing or giving negative feedbacks. This is one of the most prominent features of Malaysian communicative styles as acknowledged by past research (Mohd Salleh, 2006; Ali, 2000). Finally, it is evident in the findings that interlocutors are blatantly insulting and disagreeing with the point of view of others without proper explanation.

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