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Linguistic Impoliteness in the Rocky Gerung vs Silfester Matutina Debate on Rakyat Bersuara TV iNEWS

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Abstract

This study investigates the strategic deployment of impoliteness in political discourse using a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on the highly confrontational iNEWS YouTube video "Keras! Rocky Singgung Penjilat, Silfester Emosi hingga Keluar Kata Kasar - Rakyat Bersuara 03/09." Employing Culpeper's (1996) Impoliteness Theory, the research identified and analyzed 52 instances of impoliteness used by the discussants. The quantitative findings reveal that Negative Impoliteness is the most dominant strategy, accounting for 28.85% of all occurrences. This clearly indicates that speakers prioritized direct attacks on the opponent's intellectual credibility and self-worth to increase social distance. Following this were Sarcasm or Mock Impoliteness (23.08%) and Withholding Politeness (21.15%). These findings demonstrate that impoliteness in this public forum is not merely an emotional byproduct but a calculated rhetorical strategy used to assert dominance, attack the opponent's negative face, and shape public perception. The prevalence of these strategies underscores the confrontational nature of modern political debates on digital platforms. The study offers practical implications for media literacy and political communication studies, while future research should explore the audience impact of these strategies and their contribution to political polarization in the digital age.

Keywords: Linguistic Impoliteness, Debate Discourse, Aggressive Communication, Public Discourse, Impoliteness Strategy.

Introduction

Language plays a crucial role in human communication as a tool for conveying information, ideas, and emotions. In public spaces, particularly in debate forums,

language serves as the primary medium for expressing critical and diverse viewpoints. However, the use of language in debates often deviates from the norms of politeness that should be maintained, especially when differences in opinion lead to impoliteness. This phenomenon becomes even more evident when showcased through mass media and digital platforms like YouTube, allowing a wide audience to witness debates that not only sharpen arguments but also frequently involve harsh language, sarcasm, and even personal **attacks** (Islamiyah, 2021; Juliani et al., 2022)**.** While politeness, explained by Brown and Levinson functions as a strategy to avoid conflict and maintain one's public self-image, its opposing phenomenon, impoliteness, actively seeks to attack an individual's social face, ultimately leading to conflict and disharmony (Culpeper, 1996). This strategic linguistic aggression is crucial to analyze in political communication.

The specific context for this study is the highly-charged debate between political analysts Rocky Gerung and Silfester Matutina on the iNEWS TV program 'Rakyat Bersuara,' which subsequently went viral on various social media platforms. The speakers, known for their opposing viewpoints, engaged in consistently intense and confrontational exchanges, which serves as a compelling real-world example of impoliteness in Indonesian political discourse (Suci Damayanti et al., 2024). Therefore, this study aims to achieve the following objectives: First, to identify and classify the specific strategies of impoliteness used by Rocky Gerung and Silfester Matutina during the debate. Second, to analyze the distribution and frequency of these impoliteness strategies.

The impoliteness phenomenon is best analyzed through Culpeper's Impoliteness Theory, which outlines five main strategies in verbal interaction: 1) *bald on record impoliteness* (explicit face threat without mitigation), 2) *positive impoliteness* (demeaning others by ignoring them, showing lack of empathy, or misusing identity), 3) *negative impoliteness* (attacking others' face through intimidation, mocking, or insulting), 4) *sarcasm or mock politeness* (pretending to show politeness while concealing impoliteness), and 5) *withhold politeness* (the absence of expected politeness) (Culpeper, 1996; Culpeper et al., 2003). This framework is exceptionally suitable for analyzing political debates because it moves beyond the focus on conflict avoidance inherent in politeness theory to explicitly detail the strategies for face-attack (Aulia Hafisa, 2020). Given that political discourse often necessitates the aggressive challenging of an opponent's credibility and the strategic deployment of power, actions fundamentally aimed at damaging "face", Culpeper's framework provides the most comprehensive and direct analytical tool for dissecting the mechanisms of confrontation (Burgers et al., 2016).

Several previous studies have analyzed impoliteness in language across different contexts, such as among students (Septika, H. D., & Prasetya, 2022), social media (Vani & Sabardila, 2020), Kardhasin series on youtube (Ramdhany & Ambalegin, 2023), (Nole & Sinaga, 2025) comments of netizen on Najwa Shihab

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youtube channel (Sinaga et al., 2024), Comment Column on the Performance of President Joko Widodo's Administration (Haris et al., 2020), Simsons movie (Meylana et al., 2024), (Kelvin & Rudianto, 2023) "can you ever forgive me? movie (Kelvin & Rudianto, 2023), memes during the 2024 (Anwar et al., 2024), political comments on social media, (Ambarita, 2024), and naturally occurring data (Ahmed & Hussein, 2024). This study offers a unique contribution as no research has specifically highlighted impoliteness in a high-profile, live-broadcast political debate that subsequently went viral on digital platforms in Indonesia, applying the full scope of Culpeper's taxonomy to the sustained, reciprocal exchange between two political figures. Given Indonesia's current heated political climate, with debates occurring among the general public and political circles, this focus on *oral, dialogic, and public-facing impoliteness* in a viral debate is highly relevant and intriguing to analyze.

While understanding the history of social media's political role, its evolution from mere entertainment to an influential tool is important (Firdauz & Sobari, 2024; Magdaci et al., 2022), this background will be condensed or reserved for the Literature Review section to maintain focus. Political discussions, encompassing mechanisms like diplomacy, negotiation, alliances, and conflicts aimed at social order (Matthes et al., 2023; Hasan et al., 2024), are now widely accessible via digital platforms (Andersson, 2024; Borchers, 2025). This research is significant as it provides deeper insights into how the use of impolite language shapes public opinion and influences the dynamics of political communication within this digital landscape. It is hoped that the findings will contribute not only to a better theoretical understanding of pragmatic mechanisms in confrontational discourse but also offer practical implications for media literacy, political communication education, and debate moderation in Indonesia, thereby helping to foster more civil public dialogue in line with unique local politeness norms.

Method

Research Design and Data Source

This research employed a **descriptive qualitative approach** to provide an in-depth and contextual depiction of linguistic impoliteness. This method is essential for interpreting the complex pragmatic failures that occur during heated verbal and non-verbal interactions. The primary data source was a viral video from the iNews YouTube channel titled: *"Keras! Rocky Singgung Penjilat, Silfester Emosi hingga Keluar Kata Kasar - Rakyat Bersuara 03/09"*. **Purposive sampling** was used for selection based on two criteria: (1) the video features a highly confrontational exchange between two well-known public figures, guaranteeing a high density of impoliteness instances; and (2) its viral status confirms its high social and linguistic salience in the Indonesian public sphere. The data encompasses both the speakers' verbal expressions (utterances) and relevant non-verbal actions (e.g., intonation, gestures) that manifested during the debate.

Data Collection and Unit of Analysis

Data collection was conducted through non-participant observation and note-taking. The process involved: (1) Intensive Listening and Viewing of the video; (2) Complete Data Transcription of all relevant verbal expressions; and (3) Recording of Non-verbal Actions indicating impoliteness. The fundamental **unit of analysis** (data unit) was defined as one instance of a **Face-Threatening Act (FTA)**. Specifically, one data unit corresponds to a single turn, utterance, phrase, or non-verbal action that is explicitly coded according to Culpeper's (1996) definition as an attempt to attack or challenge the addressee's positive or negative face.

Data Analysis and Coding Procedures

The systematic qualitative model by **Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman** was utilized (Miles & Huberman, 2014), consisting of three interactive flows:

1. **Data Reduction:** This involved selecting, focusing, and coding the data. The data was systematically coded based on Culpeper's (1996) five impoliteness strategies. For instance, an utterance like *"Anda itu penjilat!"* (You are a flatterer!) was coded as **Negative Impoliteness** (attacking Positive Face by questioning integrity), while a brief, unmitigated threat, such as *"Diam!"* (Shut up!), was coded as **Bald-on-Record Impoliteness**. Data irrelevant to the research focus (e.g., neutral factual statements) were excluded.
2. **Data Display:** The analyzed data was presented in systematic tables and matrices, including the original Indonesian Quotation, English Translation, Context, Non-verbal Act, Analysis, and Coded Impoliteness Strategy.
3. **Conclusion Drawing and Verification:** Final conclusions regarding the patterns and forms of impoliteness were drawn and verified against the coded evidence.

Reliability Measures

To ensure the **reliability and validity** of the coding process, **inter-coder reliability measures** were employed. A second independent coder, trained in Culpeper's framework, analyzed a random subset (20%) of the total data (52 instances). The research achieved a high percentage of agreement (**above 85%**) between the two coders, ensuring that the interpretation and categorization of the impoliteness instances were robust and consistent. A limitation remains the inherent challenge of researcher subjectivity in interpreting pragmatic meaning and speaker intent, which was mitigated by this reliability check and careful contextual analysis.

Results

The data for this study were collected from the iNEWS YouTube channel, specifically from the video titled "Keras! Rocky Singgung Penjilat, Silfester Emosi

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hingga Keluar Kata Kasar - Rakyat Bersuara 03/09". The analysis employs Culpeper's Impoliteness Theory, which categorizes impoliteness into five strategies: Bald on Record Impoliteness, Positive Impoliteness, Negative Impoliteness, Sarcasm or Mock Impoliteness, and Withholding Politeness.

Overall, 52 instances of impoliteness were identified in the discourse. The following table provides the full frequency distribution before calculation:

Table 1: The presentage of impoliteness strategic

No	Types of Impoliteness Strategies	Frequency (n)	Speaker Distribution (Known Examples)
1	Bald on Record Impoliteness (BOR)	6	Predominantly Silfester (Direct Insult)
2	Positive Impoliteness (PI)	6	Exclusively Rocky Gerung (Intellectual Attack)
3	Negative Impoliteness (NI)	15	Predominantly Rocky Gerung (Contempt/Imposition)
4	Sarcasm or Mock Impoliteness (SM)	12	Predominantly Rocky Gerung (Irony/Ridicule)
5	Withold Impoliteness (WP)	11	Rocky Gerung & Moderator (Passive Aggression/Avoidance)
	TOTAL	**52**	

Based on the raw data, Negative Impoliteness (15 instances) and Sarcasm or Mock Impoliteness (12 instances) are the most frequent strategies, primarily employed by Rocky Gerung to assert intellectual dominance and discredit his opponent, Silfester.

Detailed Analysis of Impoliteness Strategies (Culpeper, 1996)

1. Bald on Record Impoliteness (BOR)

BOR refers to speech or actions that directly and openly convey offense without any attempt at mitigation. It is the most direct form of attack, disregarding the recipient's face needs entirely.

Table 2: The Utterance of Bald on Record Impoliteness (BOR)

No	Utterance (Indonesian)	English Translation	Speaker	Linguistic & Theoretical Analysis
1	Example 1: "Ya bagaimana saya mau terangin, kalau dia sedungu ini."	"How can I explain if he is this stupid?"	Rocky	The highly derogatory word "sedungu" (this stupid) is an intense disparagement that emphasizes the speaker's social and intellectual distance while clearly conveying contempt, achieving the core function of NI.
2	Example 2: "Jangan kau bodohin terus masyarakat ini. Buktikan."	"Don't you keep fooling this public. Prove it."	Rocky	This utterance uses a direct command (imperative mood) combined with the accusation of deceit ("bodohin" - fooling). This is an imposition, demanding the recipient change their action, violating the Negative Face need for autonomy.
3	Example 3: "Mereka tonton kebodohanmu."	"They [the students] are watching your stupidity."	Silfester	Silfester uses the audience (mahasiswa) as a weapon to amplify the insult "kebodohanmu" (your stupidity). This publicly imposes shame and uses a form of FTA of association to maximize the negative impact.

2. Positive Impoliteness (PI)

Positive Impoliteness is aimed at damaging the recipient's Positive Face (the desire to be approved of and liked). This strategy is often used to undermine the opponent's self-esteem and assert dominance by excluding or humiliating them.

Table 3: The Utterance of Positive Impoliteness (PI)

No	Utterance (Indonesian)	English Translation	Speaker	Linguistic & Theoretical Analysis

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1	Example 1: "Pengetahuanmu tentang metodologi minus tujuh. You nggak ngerti metodologi."	"Your knowledge of methodology is minus seven. You don't understand methodology."	Rocky	Rocky uses hyperbole ("minus tujuh") to aggressively challenge Silfester's intellectual capacity. This is an explicit refusal to cooperate or recognize the opponent's contribution, fulfilling the goal of PI to diminish competence.
2	Example 2: "Anda kenal orang itu?. Dengan nada yang meremehkan dan sedikit penegasan sambil tertawa. Nggak tau anda, dia juga bujang lapuk."	"Do you know that person? [Said in a scornful tone while laughing] You don't know, he's also an old bachelor."	Rocky	The use of a scornful tone and laughter (non-verbal cue) works to mock the recipient's lack of knowledge, emphasizing an in-group/out-group dynamic where Rocky belongs to the "knowledgeable" in-group, violating Silfester's Positive Face.
3	Example 3: "Okay, biarawan tidak menikah tuh, tahun 700 paus itu menikah. anda nggak mengerti sejarah."	"Okay, monks don't marry, the pope married in 700. You don't understand history."	Rocky	This involves challenging or deriding the recipient's presuppositions about common knowledge, immediately placing the speaker in a position of intellectual superiority to assert dominance.

3. Negative Impoliteness (NI)

Negative Impoliteness focuses on damaging the recipient's Negative Face (the desire to be autonomous and unrestricted). It often involves imposing on the recipient, disparaging them, or invading their personal space.

Table 4: The Utterance of Negative Impoliteness (NI)

No	**Utterance (Indonesian)**	**English Translation**	**Speaker**	**Linguistic & Theoretical Analysis**
1	Example 1: "Ya bagaimana saya mau terangin,	"How can I explain if he	Rocky	The highly derogatory word "sedungu" (this stupid) is an intense disparagement that

	kalau dia sedungu ini."	is this stupid?"		emphasizes the speaker's social and intellectual distance while clearly conveying contempt, achieving the core function of NI.
2	Example 2: "Jangan kau bodohin terus masyarakat ini. Buktikan."	"Don't you keep fooling this public. Prove it."	Rocky	This utterance uses a direct command (imperative mood) combined with the accusation of deceit ("bodohin" - fooling). This is an imposition, demanding the recipient change their action, violating the Negative Face need for autonomy.
3	Example 3: "Mereka tonton kebodohanmu."	"They [the students] are watching your stupidity."	Silfester	Silfester uses the audience (mahasiswa) as a weapon to amplify the insult "kebodohanmu" (your stupidity). This publicly imposes shame and uses a form of FTA of association to maximize the negative impact.

4. Sarcasm or Mock Impoliteness (SM)

This strategy uses apparent politeness, irony, or humorous tone to mask an underlying derogatory meaning, creating discomfort or ridiculing the target.

Table 5: The Utterance of Sarcasm or Mock Impoliteness (SM)

No	**Utterance (Indonesian)**	**English Translation**	**Speaker**	**Linguistic & Theoretical Analysis**
1	Example 1: "Sucses is not free, you have to Jilat for it. Orangnya ada disini."	"Success is not free, you have to suck up for it. The person is right here."	Rocky	Rocky employs linguistic substitution, replacing "fight" with "jilat" (suck up) to mock the concept of meritocracy and indirectly insult individuals perceived as sycophants. This use of irony is the hallmark of SM.

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2	Example 2: "Mengapa semua orang masih berupaya membela Mulyono tuh."	"Why is everyone still trying to defend Mulyono."	Rocky	Using an alternative, possibly humorous or dismissive nickname ("Mulyono" for Jokowi) to refer to a figure of authority is a subtle form of ridicule, creating social distance and undermining the figure's seriousness.
3	Example 3: "Gunanya presiden jokowi ini seribu kayak lipat lebih dari anda."	"The use of President Jokowi is a thousand times more than you."	Silfester	This utterance uses exaggerated praise for one entity (Jokowi) to mockingly diminish the value of the other (Rocky). The extreme quantifier "seribu kayak lipat" (a thousand times more) signifies mockery rather than sincere comparison.

5. Withholding Politeness (WP)

WP is a passive strategy where an individual deliberately refrains from offering the politeness or customary respect expected in a situation (e.g., greetings, acknowledgment, or gratitude). It conveys subtle disapproval or dismissal.

Table 6: The Utterance of Withholding Politeness (WP)

No	**Utterance (Indonesian)**	**English Translation**	**Speaker**	**Linguistic & Theoretical Analysis**
1	Example 1: "Kita semua pasti ngerti tuh, bahwa iya (Jokowi) memang Cawe-Cawe. Walau tidak bisa dibuktikan."	"We all surely understand that yes, Jokowi is indeed interfering, even though it cannot be proven."	Rocky	Rocky makes a strong accusation but uses the phrase "walau tidak bisa dibuktikan" (even though it cannot be proven) as a form of ironic hedging, withholding the expected legalistic or formal commitment to the accusation, allowing the criticism to stand while

				avoiding direct accountability.
2	Example 2 (Ambiguity): Moderator: "Saya rasa pembicaraannya lebih ke hal yang substantif."	"I think the discussion should be more towards substantive matters."	Moderator	This statement appears mitigating, but by advising the speakers to focus on "substantive matters," the Moderator is withholding the positive evaluation of the preceding conversational turns, implying they were *not* substantive. This is a common Ambiguous Case where the intent to maintain order overlaps with the act of subtle criticism.
3	Example 3 (Ambiguity): Moderator: "Nggak masalah kok, nggak ada masalah."	"It's fine, no problem."	Moderator	This utterance is used immediately after a moment of high tension. By over-reassuring the audience ("nggak ada masalah"), the Moderator withholds the necessary seriousness required to address the conflict, dismissing the tension rather than resolving it respectfully.

Research Findings and Implications

Based on the data analyzed, Negative Impoliteness is the most frequently used strategy at 28.85%. This is visually represented by the tallest bar in the distribution chart (a bar chart is recommended here to visualize the variance between the top three strategies and the lower two). The dominance of Negative Impoliteness and Sarcasm or Mock Impoliteness (a combined 51.93%) highlights the confrontational and intellectual-based attack style of the political debate. Speakers, particularly Rocky Gerung, rely on direct contempt (NI) and subtle ridicule (SM) to establish authority and dismiss the opponent's relevance.

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- Negative Impoliteness is favored because it directly and efficiently widen social distance and discredit the opponent's intellect (e.g., using terms like “sedungu” or “kebodohanmu”).
- Sarcasm is used to frame political success cynically (e.g., “Jilat”), making the opponent's arguments seem naive or dishonest.
- The significant presence of Withholding Politeness suggests that passive-aggressive strategies (ironic hedging, subtle critique via the Moderator) are crucial for managing conflict and avoiding direct accountability for strong accusations.

These findings suggest that in high-stakes Indonesian political media debates, impoliteness is a deliberate rhetorical strategy used not merely to express emotion, but to control the discourse, challenge credibility, and influence public perception.

Discussion

Strategic Face-Attack: Dominant Patterns and Contextual Comparison

The data analysis reveals that impoliteness in this political debate is dominated by strategies designed for intellectual confrontation and degradation: **Negative Impoliteness (NI, 28.85%), Sarcasm/Mock Impoliteness (SM, 23.08%),** and **Withholding Politeness (WP, 21.15%).** This distribution strongly suggests that the primary rhetorical objective is a **calculated face-attack** rather than mere emotional venting.

Dominance of Intellectual Attacks (NI & SM)

The dominance of NI indicates that the main target is the opponent’s **Negative Face**, the desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition, by systematically challenging their credibility and intelligence, as exemplified by Rocky Gerung’s remarks. This NI dominance pattern **aligns with observations even in non-political YouTube content (Ramdhany & Ambalegin, 2023),** confirming its effectiveness as a pervasive strategy for establishing dominance and increasing social distance.

The high frequency of **SM** (Sarcasm/Mock Impoliteness) underscores the strategic use of indirect aggression prevalent in digital media. This result is **nearly commensurate with the findings of Sinaga et al.**, who identified Sarcasm as the most dominant strategy (27%) in netizen comments on a political YouTube channel (Sinaga et al., 2024). Sarcasm functions as a vehicle for veiled criticism and ridicule (Vani & Sabardila, 2020)**,** allowing speakers to attack the opponent's 'face' through irony, which **Ambarita and Anwar et al.** note is a common trigger and function of impoliteness in political memes and social media commentary (Ambarita, 2024; Anwar et al., 2024).

Strategic Restraint and Cross-Media Comparison

Conversely, the low occurrence of **Bald on Record Impoliteness (BOR, 11.54%)** demonstrates strategic restraint within the structured media forum. This contrasts with **its prominence in movie dialogues (Kelvin & Rudianto, 2023),** indicating that public figures strategically favor indirect methods (NI, SM) over overt insults (BOR) to maintain public image and control during the debate. This strategy serves to achieve rhetorical goals without incurring extreme social or media consequences.

Theoretical Contribution and Indonesian Cultural Context

Theoretical Nuance: Challenging Culpeper's Strategy Hierarchy

The low rate of BOR in this high-risk public forum offers a valuable **theoretical contribution** to Culpeper's model in the context of high-stakes Indonesian political discourse. Despite BOR being the most direct *Face-Threatening Act* (FTA), speakers strategically suppress its usage in favor of more covert strategies (NI and SM). This suggests that **media accountability and social distance** act as strong filtering mechanisms, modifying the natural hierarchy of impoliteness strategies. In formal public debates, **imposition and subtle ridicule (NI/SM)** are prioritized over **direct insult (BOR)** to prevent irreparable reputational damage.

Cultural Context: Violating Rasa *and* Unggah-Ungguh

The impoliteness strategies detected, particularly the use of personal attacks (*pecundang*, *sedungu*) and sarcasm, directly violate core tenets of **Indonesian politeness norms**, specifically the concept of ***rasa*** (a feeling of respect and social harmony) and ***basa-basi*** (the cultural expectation of indirectness and formulaic politeness in formal contexts). Speakers intentionally discard the expected Javanese/Indonesian ***unggah-ungguh*** (etiquette/manners) to generate rhetorical shock value. The **adversarial** nature of this impoliteness differs from cases driven by **social hierarchy or lack of linguistic etiquette (Prasetya et al., 2022),** underscoring that the intent here is to deepen ideological divides (Anwar et al., 2024).

Power Asymmetry and Strategy Selection

The analysis of the interaction between Rocky Gerung (an intellectual critic) and Silfester Matutina (a political figure defending the establishment) reveals that the impoliteness strategies employed are heavily influenced by the power dynamics between them. Rocky Gerung primarily utilizes Negative Impoliteness (NI) and Sarcasm/Mockery (SM) to assert his intellectual authority and moral superiority. He employs NI to reduce Silfester's status to that of an incompetent

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individual, thereby effectively delegitimizing the arguments he represents. Conversely, Silfester Matutina, especially when pressured, more frequently uses the Bald On Record (BOR) strategy, referring to his opponent as "pecundang" (loser). This shift indicates a movement from a strategic position to a highly emotional defense of his personal Positive Face and political loyalty, which he perceives as threatened. Overall, this pattern reveals that impoliteness is utilized differently based on the power context: one party uses it to disarm authority (Rocky Gerung), while the other uses it to defend a threatened status (Silfester Matutina).

Platform Effects and the Visibility of WP

The highly confrontational pattern is profoundly shaped by the **live televised debate format** (Platform Effects). The oral medium allows for the effective use of **prosody** (tone, volume) and **paralinguistic cues** (laughter, scornful expression) to amplify the impoliteness. The significant presence of **WP (21.15%)** is crucial. The detection of this passive-aggressive strategy in the video data, but **not in purely textual comment data (Sinaga et al., 2024),** confirms that the communication medium (oral vs. written) dictates the feasibility and visibility of certain strategies. Furthermore, the low frequency of **Positive Impoliteness (PI, 11.54%)** compared to its high usage in **entertainment media,** reinforces that the primary goal here is serious intellectual contestation (attacking negative face) rather than the manipulation of personal camaraderie (Meylana et al., 2024).

The chosen strategies (NI and SM) are designed for **performance and rapid public consumption.** These confrontational tactics are aimed at **galvanizing audience support** (Audience Reception) by positioning the favored speaker as the intellectual victor who is unafraid to challenge the status quo. The analysis strongly **indicates** that impoliteness in this political debate functions as a calculated rhetorical strategy focused on intellectual degradation and status displacement, largely driven by the performative demands of the televised medium.

However, it is essential to **acknowledge the alternative interpretation** that some instances of impoliteness, particularly the sudden outbursts of BOR, may result from **genuine emotional leakage** or spontaneous affective response to high pressure, rather than being purely strategic. While the distribution overwhelmingly points to calculation, emotional provocation remains a valid contextual factor, and differentiating between the two requires a deeper analysis of the speaker's physiological state and immediate conversational history.

Conclusion

The analysis of impoliteness strategies in the iNEWS YouTube video “Keras! Rocky Singgung Penjilat, Silfester Emosi hingga Keluar Kata Kasar - Rakyat

Bersuara 03/09" reveals that Negative Impoliteness is the predominant strategy, accounting for 28.85% of all occurrences. This finding suggests that the primary rhetorical goal in this heated political discourse is the direct challenge to the opponent's intellectual credibility and self-worth, aimed at increasing social distance. The second and third most frequent strategies were Sarcasm or Mock Impoliteness (23.08%) and Withholding Politeness (21.15%), respectively. Sarcasm was leveraged for indirect aggression and ridicule via irony, while Withholding Politeness served as a subtle yet powerful tool to invalidate an opponent's argument by deliberately omitting expected respectful acknowledgment. The distribution confirms that adversarial discourse in this media context relies heavily on face-attacking acts rather than explicit physical threats or direct challenges to group inclusion.

The observed prevalence of Negative Impoliteness, Sarcasm, and Withholding Politeness strongly indicates that impoliteness in this political exchange is not an emotional lapse but a calculated rhetorical strategy for dominance assertion and credibility-challenging. The low frequency of both Bald on Record Impoliteness (11.54%) and Positive Impoliteness (11.54%) suggests that political figures in structured, televised debates strategically favor sophisticated, indirect aggression, such as intellectual dismissal and irony, over unmitigated, overt insults. This tactical selection aims to maintain a semblance of control and public image while effectively attacking the opponent's negative face. Therefore, the findings support and extend Culpeper's theory by demonstrating how specific impoliteness strategies are selectively deployed in cyber pragmatics to frame the opposition as intellectually inferior, thus serving as a potent instrument for shaping public perception and influencing the tone of political communication in digital media.

A key strength of this study is the rigorous quantitative methode applied to authentic, high-stakes political discourse, yielding precise data on strategy distribution. However, a significant limitation is the lack of analysis into the perlocutionary effect, the audience's reception and interpretation of these impoliteness strategies, which is crucial for understanding their sociopolitical impact. For future research, it is recommended to incorporate a mixed-methods approach that includes the qualitative analysis of audience engagement (e.g., YouTube comments) to bridge the gap between speakers' strategies and audience opinion formation. Additionally, comparative studies across different media platforms (e.g., televised debate versus textual social media) are encouraged to further delineate how the channel of communication dictates the strategic deployment and visibility of specific impoliteness strategies. These findings carry important implications for pragmatics, underscoring the necessity of recognizing impoliteness as a deliberate rhetorical function essential for analyzing adversarial political discourse and its role in reinforcing ideological divides.

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