

IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES IN ONLINE INTERACTION: A CASE STUDY OF HAILEY BIEBER'S TIKTOK COMMENT SECTION

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Abstrak

Penggunaan media sosial kini telah menjadi bagian dari kehidupan setiap orang. Siapa pun dapat meninggalkan komentar sesuka hati, termasuk komentar yang tidak sopan. Komentar-komentar tidak sopan ini sering ditemukan di kolom komentar selebriti atau influencer TikTok, salah satunya adalah Hailey Bieber. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap strategi ketidaksopanan dengan menggunakan teori dari Culpeper (2005) pada kolom komentar TikTok milik Hailey Bieber, serta mencari tahu alasan mengapa satu jenis strategi lebih sering muncul dibandingkan jenis lainnya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif-kualitatif untuk mengumpulkan dan menganalisis data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat empat strategi ketidaksopanan yang digunakan dalam kolom komentar tersebut, yaitu ketidaksopanan langsung (*bald-on record*), ketidaksopanan positif, ketidaksopanan negatif, dan kesopanan yang mengejek atau sarkasme. Selain itu, sarkasme ditemukan sebagai jenis yang paling sering muncul karena mengandung ambiguitas yang dapat menyamarkan makna dan maksud sebenarnya dari suatu ujaran.

Kata Kunci: strategi ketidaksopanan, komentar TikTok, sarkasme, Hailey Bieber.

Abstract

The use of social media is now part of everyone's life. People can leave any comments as they please, including impolite comments. These impolite comments written by people are often found in celebrity or Tik Tok influencer's comment sections, one of them is in Hailey Bieber's. Therefore, this study aimed to reveal impoliteness strategies using the theory of Culpeper (2005) in Hailey Bieber's TikTok comment section and finding the reason why one type occurred more frequently than another. This study uses descriptive-qualitative methods to collect and compute the data. It is found that there are four impoliteness strategies utilized in the comment sections, those are *bald-on record* impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, and mocking politeness or sarcasm. Moreover, sarcasm is revealed to be the most frequent type to be occurs since it contains ambiguity that can cover up the actual meaning and intention of the utterances or statements

Keywords: impoliteness strategy, TikTok comments, sarcasm, Hailey Bieber.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is not only used for conveying messages but also reflects human social interaction through politeness (Brown, 2015). As technology advances, interactions now extend beyond face-to-face communication into social media, where users frequently engage with each other and with public figures (Seigner et al., 2023). On platforms like TikTok, millions of interactions occur daily (Abbasi et al., 2023), and its fast-paced algorithm often causes users to comment impulsively, sometimes invading others' personal space (Modha et al., 2020). Commenters may also imitate each other, forming group dynamics that normalize certain behaviors (Mendelson, 2023). Thus, while social media offers many benefits, it also presents risks (Dutt, 2023).

Anonymity through fake profiles encourages users to express impoliteness freely. According to Culpeper (cited in Putri, 2022), there are five impoliteness strategies: *bald on record*, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness,

sarcasm/mock politeness, and withhold politeness. Such strategies are often found in the comment sections of celebrities and influencers (Muflihatunnisa, 2023), including Hailey Bieber. Since marrying Justin Bieber in 2018, Hailey has been involved in public controversy with his ex-girlfriend, Selena Gomez, which has polarized fans and triggered waves of impolite comments—especially on TikTok. This study will specifically analyze impoliteness in the comment sections of Hailey's TikTok videos.

Similar research has been conducted before. Putri (2022) examined politeness and impoliteness in Bella Poarch's TikTok comments using theories from Brown & Levinson (1987) and Culpeper (2005). Cornelia and Soelistyo (2023) also used Culpeper's theory to analyze impoliteness in interactions between Karen's Diner employees and customers. Meanwhile, other studies (Meiratnasari & Wijayanto, 2019; Mulyono & Suryoputro, 2019; Ammaida, 2020) focus primarily on politeness strategies in different contexts using Brown and Levinson's framework.

Unlike previous studies, this research will focus solely on impoliteness strategies using Culpeper's (2005) theory, with Hailey Bieber's TikTok comment section as the subject. It will also examine why a particular type of impoliteness is more dominant than others.

IMPOLITENESS

Putri (Putri, 2022, p.20) argues that impoliteness is contrasting with politeness in its aspects which could happen whenever the speaker tries to attack the interlocutors and harm them consciously using their utterances. She quoted Culpeper (2005) theory of impoliteness in Mirhosseini et al., (2017) saying that the impoliteness strategies would occur when: "1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or 2) the hearer perceives and constructs behavior as intentionally face-attack, or a combination of (1) and (2)". Which means that impoliteness strategies would be categorized as success whenever the speaker intentionally says something mean or harmful and the hearer feels attacked by that action.

TYPES OF IMPOLITENESS STRATEGY

Putri (Putri, 2022, p.21) cited Culpeper's five impoliteness strategies which were also used by Cornelia and Soelistyo (2023) in their research. Those strategies are;

A. Bald-On Record Impoliteness

This strategy occurs when a speaker expresses impoliteness in a direct, unambiguous, and often blunt manner. The intention is clearly to attack or threaten the hearer's face without any attempt to soften or mitigate the impact of the message. This type of impoliteness leaves no room for misinterpretation, as the speaker deliberately conveys their negative evaluation in the most straightforward way possible.

E.g. [1]

A: I feel like wearing a red dress for my birthday.

B: Red look sucks on you.

This example illustrates how the speaker directly insults the hearer's taste in fashion without any effort to be polite or subtle.

B. Positive Impoliteness

Positive impoliteness involves behavior that damages the hearer's positive face, which refers to their desire to be liked, appreciated, and accepted. In this strategy, the speaker intentionally ignores or undermines the hearer's need for approval, often by dismissing their presence, opinions, or feelings.

E.g. [2]

A: Look, I got a new hat.

B: Whatever.

Here, Speaker B's response shows a lack of interest or acknowledgment, which can make the hearer feel disrespected and socially excluded. This subtle form of rudeness can be just as damaging as direct insults, especially in repeated interactions.

C. Negative Impoliteness

Negative impoliteness is aimed at attacking the hearer's negative face, which is their desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition. This strategy makes the hearer feel uncomfortable, ashamed, or

belittled, often by criticizing or challenging their choices, opinions, or preferences.

E.g. [3]

A: I really can't wait for the new gelato store to open.

B: Oh, come on. You know you don't like gelato.

Speaker B undermines Speaker A's excitement and personal preference, which not only questions their sincerity but also imposes judgment on their tastes. This tactic subtly forces the hearer into a defensive position, creating discomfort or embarrassment.

D. Mock Politeness or Sarcasm

Mock politeness, also known as sarcasm, occurs when a speaker uses seemingly polite language with an underlying intent to mock, ridicule, or insult the hearer. This strategy is often disguised as a compliment or polite remark but is contextually understood as ironic or insulting.

E.g. [4]

A: Do you think this vintage skirt suits me?

B: Yeah, you look like my grandma in the 60s.

Although Speaker B appears to give a compliment, the comparison to an elderly figure from the past clearly carries mocking undertones. The sarcastic nature of such comments creates ambiguity, allowing the speaker to deny their negative intent while still delivering an insult.

E. Withhold politeness

This strategy involves the absence of expected politeness, such as failing to offer thanks, greetings, or acknowledgments in situations that socially require them. By withholding politeness, the speaker violates the norms of courteous behavior, which can come across as dismissive or disrespectful, e.g. [5]

A: Do you want some juice? I can get you one.

B: Kay.

Speaker B's minimal and indifferent response ignores the polite offer made by Speaker A, showing a lack of gratitude or social engagement. This form of impoliteness may not appear aggressive, but it can signal disregard or a refusal to maintain positive social relations.

TIKTOK

The rise of digital communication has transformed how people interact, shifting much of our social engagement from face-to-face settings to online platforms. Among these platforms, TikTok stands out as a space where users not only consume content for entertainment but also actively participate by expressing opinions, reacting to public figures, and engaging with other users through comments. This open and interactive environment often leads to spontaneous and emotionally charged language use. Unlike offline communication, where social norms typically regulate politeness, online spaces allow for greater freedom of expression. The anonymity and lack of immediate consequences can result in direct, offensive, or even aggressive comments. These patterns make TikTok an ideal platform for analyzing linguistic impoliteness.

This study employs Culpeper's (2005) impoliteness theory, which identifies five main strategies

consist of bald on record, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and withhold politeness to examine how impoliteness is manifested in TikTok comment sections. Specifically, the comment sections of Hailey Bieber's videos are analyzed, as her public persona and ongoing controversies frequently attract polarized and emotionally intense responses from user.

METHOD

Due to the reason that the data in this study is in the form of extensive text, the research's design would be described as descriptive qualitative (Riasati, 2012). The data collected for the study is not quantifiable, but rather takes the form of impoliteness strategies made in reference to the study's subject. Based on the type of impoliteness strategies employed, the study asks what kinds of strategies are mostly used.

Hailey Bieber's TikTok comment section would be the source of the data that are used in this study. It will be examined to see which types of impoliteness strategies are utilized in the comment section. Also, to discover which types of impoliteness strategies that occur the most in the comment section which become the objective of this research. Consequently, this study is mainly descriptive because it is primarily describing and examining the sentences in the comment section that contain impoliteness strategies.

The data that would be collected are the sentences or phrases found in Hailey Bieber's TikTok comment section in her particular videos around January to April 2023. The reason behind the choice of these exact months is because the rise of impolite comments in her videos is high around those months after her problem with Selena Gomez blew up again. Each video from each month would be analyzed and compared whether the type of impoliteness strategies that occur the most are constantly the same or different. Those four videos are uploaded in TikTok at 01-10-2023, 02-17-2023, 03-29-2023, and 04-07-2023 (mm-dd-yy) from 10 sample comments in each video whose username will not be revealed in this research and be anonymized.

There are several methods for gathering data: 1) Reading the comment section from each video 2) Choosing 10 random sample comments that contain impoliteness strategies 3) Listing down the type of impoliteness strategies that employed in the selected comments using Culpeper's theory 4) Determining the most frequent strategies that appear from each video 5) Determining the types of strategies that utilized the most from the whole videos.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Video 01-10-2023

Comments	Impoliteness Strategy Types
<i>Selena Gomez</i> (Datum 1)	Positive Impoliteness
<i>Rare beauty is better and no one can be her so chill</i> (Datum 2)	Negative Impoliteness

<i>YOU CANT BE A BULLY AND A VICTIM AT THE SAME TIME, youre talking about how hard has 2023 been for you on your stories but you DON'T FREAKING APOLOGIZE</i> (Datum 3)	Bald-on Record Impoliteness
<i>tzzzzz</i> (Datum 4)	Positive Impoliteness
<i>SELENA>>></i> (Datum 5)	Positive Impoliteness
<i>#teamselena</i> (Datum 6)	Positive Impoliteness
<i>Use Rare Beauty</i> (Datum 7)	Negative Impoliteness
<i>Why are you so obsessed with Selena?</i> (Datum 8)	Negative impoliteness
<i>Mean & bitter girl makeup tutooooo</i> (Datum 9)	Bald-On Record Impoliteness
<i>S e l e n a is prettier than you</i> (Datum 10)	Bald-On Record Impoliteness

Table 2. Video 02-17-2023

Comments	Impoliteness Strategy Types
<i>James Charles dupe</i> (Datum 11)	Sarcasm
<i>She is pretty but nothing more then just an ordinary girl!</i> (Datum 12)	Bald-On Record Impoliteness
<i>Side eye</i> (Datum 13)	Positive Impoliteness
<i>AWOOP jumpscare...</i> (Datum 14)	Positive Impoliteness
<i>Why u guys insulting James Charles like come one now</i> (Datum 15)	Sarcasm
<i>Say sorry to my eyes</i> (Datum 16)	Sarcasm
<i>Girl be looking like a man sometimes</i> (Datum 17)	Sarcasm
<i>You may have the last name, you may even have the fame, but could never, and will never amount to the queen</i> (Datum 18)	Bald-On Record Impoliteness
<i>Get off my fyp</i> (Datum 19)	Bald-On Record Impoliteness
<i>She Think shes something</i> (Datum 20)	Sarcasm

Table 3. 03-29-2023

Comments	Impoliteness Strategy Types
<i>Are you famous too?</i> (Datum 21)	Sarcasm
<i>Who is this? Are you like famous or something?</i> (Datum 22)	Sarcasm
<i>Don't mention me in this crap</i> (Datum 23)	Positive Impoliteness
<i>This was hard to watch...</i> (Datum 24)	Positive Impoliteness

<i>Hateful girl</i> (Datum 25)	Bald-On Record Impoliteness
<i>Can I ask who are you?</i> (Datum 26)	Sarcasm
<i>U need to take a shower u look greasy</i> (Datum 27)	Bald-On Record Impoliteness
<i>Ok wannabee</i> (Datum 28)	Positive Impoliteness
<i>No one like you anymore</i> (Datum 29)	Negative Impoliteness
<i>Dirty! She used Brazil to promote herself but she don't give a SHIT about this country. Y'all are so naive.</i> (Datum 30)	Bald-On Record Impoliteness

Table 4. Video 04-07-2023

Comments	Impoliteness Strategy Types
<i>Omg gigi I love you</i> (Datum 31)	Sarcasm
<i>It's giving Walmart</i> (Datum 32)	Sarcasm
<i>You are literally so pathetic</i> (Datum 33)	Bald-On Record Impoliteness
<i>Bro why is a men on my fyp</i> (Datum 34)	Sarcasm
<i>You be lookin like oli London</i> (Datum 35)	Sarcasm
<i>Omg u think u all that but fr u ain't all that</i> (Datum 36)	Negative Impoliteness
<i>Please back up from the camera</i> (Datum 37)	Sarcasm
<i>Wow Selena is pretty right</i> (Datum 38)	Sarcasm
<i>Would look lovely on Selena</i> (Datum 39)	Sarcasm
<i>Do you need professional make up artist honey?</i> (Datum 40)	Sarcasm

The results are 40 data selected randomly from Hailey Bieber's TikTok comment section taken from four different videos posted from January to April 2023. These data showed several impoliteness strategies that align with Culpeper's (2005) theory. However, in those 40 random samples of data, the last type of impoliteness which is withholding politeness were not found. Therefore, the first one is bald-on record impoliteness, where the impoliteness is uttered directly to attack the hearer. For instance, in (Datum 3) the commenter directly attacks Hailey Bieber for being a bully and never apologizes to Selena Gomez. This utterance has no ambiguity since the clarity of the commenter position against Hailey Bieber are obvious. Moreover, this type of impoliteness also occurs in (Datum 9) and (Datum 10) where the commenter directly stated their impoliteness without vagueness by calling Hailey "Mean and bitter" as well as comparing her with Selena.

The next type is positive impoliteness, where the impoliteness was uttered to disrespect the hearer's existence. In (Datum 13) and (Datum 14) the commenter aimed to disregard Hailey existence by typing "side eye" and "jumpscare" where the terms are usually used when

someone sees something unpleasant or scary. Other than that, (Datum 23) and (Datum 24) implied that the commenter does not want to be in contact with Hailey's content nor watching it at all.

Another type that is found in the comment section is negative impoliteness which is quite similar with positive impoliteness, but instead of disrespecting the hearer's existence, this type aimed to disregard the hearer's choices or feelings. For example, in (Datum 7) the commenter stated "Use Rare Beauty" to disparage Hailey's choice of makeup. The context for this statement is that Hailey tried to influence her audience and buying her product by using it like other influencer in the same application doing it (van der Bend et al., 2023) but the commenter "advised" her to use Selena's brand which is Rare Beauty to insult her feeling.

The last type that appeared in the comment section is mocking politeness or sarcasm. This type of impoliteness strategy can be described as fake politeness or mockery, in which the speaker's statement contains ambiguity and the clarity of their position is questioned. In (Datum 21) and (Datum 22) the commenter questioning Hailey's prestige which lead to vagueness whether they are genuinely asking or mocking her, even though they know that Hailey is one of the supermodels. Moreover, still related to supermodel context, the commenter in (Datum 31) also performs sarcasm by stating "Omg gigi I love you" which refer to another supermodel Gigi Hadid in Hailey's video to mock her for not being famous enough.

The Occurrence Frequency Analysis

According to the data collected in the result it was found that several impoliteness strategies appear more often than the other. See table 5 below.

Table 5. Occurrence frequency in each video

Type of Impoliteness Strategy	Occurrence Frequency			
	Video 1	Video 2	Video 3	Video 4
Bald-On Record Impoliteness	3	3	3	1
Positive Impoliteness	4	2	3	0
Negative Impoliteness	3	0	1	1
Mocking Politeness/Sarcasm	0	5	3	8
Withhold Politeness	0	0	0	0

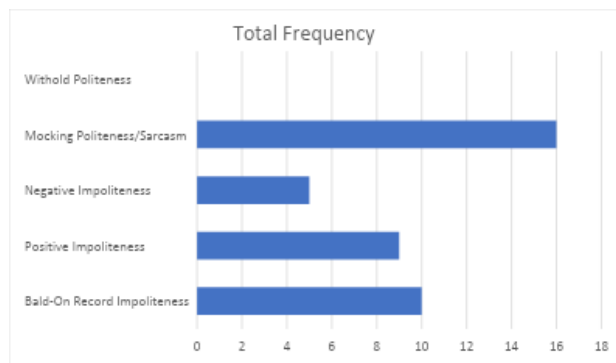
In the first video, positive impoliteness being the most occurring types with four times appearance in datum 1,4,5, and 6. Following that, bald-on record impoliteness and negative impoliteness occurred three times each. In this video there is no sarcasm nor withhold politeness. However, in the second video, the type that appeared the most is mocking politeness or sarcasm with five times occurrence. Bald-on record impoliteness following as the second most appeared with three times occurrence. Lastly, positive impoliteness in the third position with two times appearance. In the second video there is no negative impoliteness as well as withholding politeness.

The next one is the third video, with three types occurring in the same frequency. Those types are bald-on

record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, and sarcasm which appeared three times each. Lastly, negative politeness occurred only one time in datum 29. Same as the first and second video, there is no withholding politeness in this video.

Last but not least, the fourth video which has the same types as the most occurred as the second video and that is mocking politeness or sarcasm. This type occurred eight times, followed by a bald-on record and negative impoliteness appeared one time each. The data from this video do not have any positive impoliteness and withhold impoliteness. Therefore, from this data it can be computed that mocking politeness or sarcasm is the most frequent type to appear in the whole videos. See chart 1 below.

Chart 1. Total Frequency



From the chart, it can be seen that mocking politeness or sarcasm make an appearance sixteen times in total. Followed by bald-on record impoliteness with ten times appearance and positive impoliteness with nine times appearance. In the last position, negative impoliteness makes appearance only five times, and there is no withhold politeness to be found at all in the whole dataset.

The reason why mocking politeness has become the most common type is not apart from the aim of this type itself. The ambiguity of this type allows people to assume what is the actual meaning of the statements or the utterances written in the comment section, it can be laughable or insulting (Govindan & Balakrishnan, 2022). The commenters can be satire but also vaguely polite with their comments and reduce the clarity of their position. Even though many sarcasm detection machines have been invented, it does not stop people from using them since detecting sarcasm still needs common sense (Misra & Arora, 2023). Moreover, the change of public opinion in social media shifted really fast (White et al., 2023). Therefore, the use of mock politeness can be one of a way to shift their position without actually deleting the previous comments.

CONCLUSION

Overall, it can be concluded that there are four out of five impoliteness strategies utilized in the Hailey Bieber's TikTok comment section which are bald-on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, and mocking politeness or sarcasm. It was also found out that sarcasm is the most used or the most occurring type from all dataset taken. Sarcasm aimed to attack or insult the hearer with fake politeness or mockery. This type is used the most since it has certain ambiguity

that can cover up the actual meaning and intention of the commenter.

SUGGESTION

This research can be one of a resource for the future researchers who want to conduct further study about Impoliteness strategies using the theory of Culpeper (2005). This research also can be a module or example for impoliteness strategies for writers. Other than that, this research may also be reminders for all social media users to leave more appropriate comments. Further reading about the theory may also be suggested to enhance the understanding of impoliteness strategies.

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