



IMPOLITENESS IN THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT CONFIDENTIAL FUND CONGRESSIONAL HEARING: A SOCIO-PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS

Jay C. Britos¹ⁱ,

Marlon James Erjon L. Miras²,

Arron Vincent S. Villaraiz³,

Christian Jay O. Syting⁴

¹College of Teacher Education,
University of Mindanao,
Philippines

²Associate Professor,
College of Teacher Education,
University of Mindanao,
Philippines

Abstract :

Impoliteness in political discourse has become widespread and is a growing concern, contributing to uncivil deliberations and public scrutiny. This study investigated the discursive use of impoliteness in political discourse, particularly within the Office of the Vice President's Congressional Hearing. It examined how impoliteness strategies and the types of face and sociality rights they violated. Furthermore, the strategies were classified according to their functions: affective, coercive, and entertaining. A total of 100 impolite remarks were analyzed using Culpeper's Impoliteness Theory, Austin's Speech Act Theory, and Spencer-Oatey's Rapport Management. The findings revealed that off-record impoliteness was prevalent, followed by negative impoliteness and positive impoliteness. These strategies violated aspects of face (quality face and social identity face) and sociality rights (equity rights and association rights), revealing how political discourse operates through veiled aggression and strategic use of language. The study underscores the need to foster critical language awareness through seminars and curricula. It contributes to understanding language's role in reinforcing power, managing conflict, and shaping accountability in formal political contexts.

Keywords: impoliteness, impoliteness strategies, political discourse, socio-pragmatic analysis, Philippines

ⁱ Correspondence: email j.britos.533566@umindanao.edu.ph, britosjay5@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Impoliteness in political discourse has become widespread and is a growing concern, contributing to uncivil deliberations and public scrutiny (Andersson, 2023). Many exchanges of comments found in legislative hearings are characterized by the expression of impoliteness—such as disrespectful tone, gratuitous offense, and sarcasm—that can be observed in exchanges between government officials (Dacalanio *et al.*, 2024; Banguis *et al.*, 2023; Sydnor, 2018). These instances frequently involve various triggers of impoliteness, including insults, pointed criticisms, threats, and negative expressions. (Culpeper, 2011). This phenomenon not only discourages respect in formal proceedings in an unprecedented public sphere where interactions are no longer confined to institutional settings but are subject to real-time scrutiny, influencing the perception of political figures under intensified impolite exchanges (Hendar *et al.*, 2022).

Ibrahim's (2020) sociolinguistic study on impoliteness in political discourse found that terms such as "assholes", "idiot", and "disgrace" were frequently used to express impolite manners, particularly in tweets directed at Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. More so, this aligns with Salimi and Mortazavi's (2024) study, which observed similar behaviors on Twitter, identifying moral orders such as respect and concern for the common good, categorized through "criticisms" and "mockery" directed at Donald Trump and Greta Thunberg. A unique perspective further contributes to this observation by examining gender-based violence against political candidates, aligning with Culpeper's Impoliteness Theory (2011), highlighting the use of impoliteness strategies such as "threats" to harm women's political involvement (Bjarnegård *et al.*, 2020).

Furthermore, Rheault *et al.* (2019) revealed that female politicians who face a higher level of hostility are subjected to "sarcasm" that undermines their political voices. Pedersen *et al.* (2024) add another layer to this study, exploring the online abuse faced by politicians. Their findings resonate with Culpeper's impoliteness strategies perceived as "criticisms," "insults," "threats," and "sexist remarks", which were identified from the criticisms of dissatisfied citizens. Additionally, individuals were observed to directly express impolite remarks without any attempt to mitigate their incivility, which involves name-calling and derogatory language, to silence others in online political discourse (Lu & Liang 2024).

The usage of several impoliteness triggers, such as bald on record and sarcasm, is present in legislative hearings, particularly discussions on political controversies (Ambarita *et al.*, 2023), which negatively impact the face of individuals under scrutiny, influencing their public image and credibility (Wu *et al.*, 2020). This triggers different types of unconventional impoliteness, incorporating personal attacks, and can be its drawback, steering away from the point of constructive discourse, which leads to the persistent use of impolite language, such as insults, drastically heightened tensions, and adversarial exchanges (Oliveira & Miranda, 2023), highlighting how negativity has become normalized in political hearings. This dependency on impolite languages and triggers overlooks unhealthy feedback, which may foster negative faces within political discourse.

There have been various studies of impoliteness in political discourse; however, we have not encountered studies that delve into the Rapport Management theory of Spencer-Oatey

(2008). More so, this study employed Culpeper's (2016) impoliteness strategies and their functions, suggesting that impoliteness delves into the dynamic and intricate nature of human communication concerning the faces of political individuals (Pasana *et al.*, 2023), which aggravate face-threatening acts within confrontational exchanges. Additionally, this study draws on Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory to explain how utterances in political discourse do more than convey meaning; they also perform illocutionary acts with distinct illocutionary force—functioning as impoliteness formulae, such as demands, accusations, and coercion—that directly impact rapport and social face. The urgency of this research stems from the widespread use and normalization of impolite language, including insults, threats, and dismissals, which hinder healthy and constructive communication. By analyzing impoliteness strategies, speech acts, and their communicative functions, this study emphasizes the need for interventions, marking an important move toward fostering more mindful and civil interaction.

This study may shed light on the use of impoliteness. Identified with provoking (Subyantoro & Apriyanto, 2020), emotional argument (Kienpointner, 2008), and attacking the interlocutor's face (Culpeper *et al.*, 2003; Pratama, 2020). These provide meaningful learning organized around issues important to teachers and students; in this way, curriculum integration supports democracy (Beane, 2005). The study contributes to the understanding of affective, coercive, and entertaining impoliteness by identifying the strategies and tactics employed in government hearings regarding VP Saras' statements. Using linguistic impoliteness has also, mostly but not solely, concentrated on communicative behaviors, consistent with its pragmatic foundation (Culpeper & Hardaker, 2017). In this study, we analyzed the impoliteness manifested in political discourse, expanding the understanding of strategic language use in legislative settings using the Theory of Rapport management of Spencer-Oatey (2008), Impoliteness of Culpeper (2011), and Speech Acts Theory of Austin (1962)

The purpose of this study was to uncover the various impoliteness strategies and functions found in the OVP Confidential Fund Congressional Hearing. These hearings have featured instances of sharp criticism and impolite remarks of uncivil political discourse, preceding empirical data indicate that these kinds of remarks are more common in speeches, particularly in political hearings, and can involve threats and stereotypes, and perceived name-calling and vulgarities, all of which contribute to heightened perception of incivility (Chen & Lu, 2017). Building on this, this study examines how impoliteness strategies and functions violate the types of face and sociality rights by Spencer-Oatey's Rapport Management Framework (Spencer-Oatey, 2005). Additionally, this study contributes to SDG 4—Quality Education—which focuses on quality education by fostering a better understanding of the impact of impolite discourse on transparency, accountability, and constructive public engagement. It offers an educational perspective on impoliteness. Furthermore, it supports SDG 16—Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions—by shedding light on how language can undermine institutional trust and fairness in formal settings. It has been discovered that rude and disrespectful political remarks lower group prosocial behaviors and media trust (Ziegele *et al.*, 2017). Here, we expand on the research on the social implications of these remarks by examining the relationship between perceived polarization in the social and institutional implications of impoliteness in political discourse.

2. Methods

This section focuses on the study's methodology, which includes the research data, research design, and data analysis throughout the research process.

2.1. Research Data

The study analyzed 100 impolite remarks from the 2023 House Panel Hearing on the OVP Confidential Fund, drawn from the publicly available, unedited 8-hour YouTube video of the 2024 budget deliberations. This sample size allows for a manageable yet representative qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Inclusion criteria required raw, unedited footage of real-time interactions during the congressional hearing. Exclusion criteria excluded edited news clips, reports, or summary videos that lacked live interaction. Remarks were selected for their relevance and explicit use of confrontational language.

2.2. Research Design

This study employed socio-pragmatic analysis to examine how language reflects and shapes social interactions and power dynamics in political discourse (Leech, 1983, as cited by Grundy, 2014; Malmir & Derakhshan, 2020). The analysis was guided by three frameworks: Culpeper's Impoliteness Theory (2011, 2016), Austin's Speech Act Theory (1962), and Spencer-Oatey's Rapport Management Model (2015). Culpeper's theory served as the primary framework for identifying impoliteness strategies and functions within the data, emphasizing how discursive impoliteness strategies emerge through relational work. Austin's theory supported this by identifying illocutionary forces—such as directives, accusations, and sarcasm—as impoliteness formulae tied to specific strategies, viewing these acts as social actions that disrupt rapport. Spencer-Oatey's model provided a deeper lens into how these strategies violated quality face, social identity face, equity rights, and association rights, helping to explain the breakdown of face management norms and complexities of relational dynamics in the hearing.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model of qualitative data analysis, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. First, relevant impolite remarks from the OVP Congressional hearing were filtered and categorized according to Culpeper's impoliteness strategies—bald-on, off-record, positive, negative, and mock-politeness. Austin's Speech Act Theory was applied to identify illocutionary forces (e.g., directives, insinuations, accusations) as impoliteness formulae, while Spencer-Oatey's Rapport Management Model assessed how these violated quality face, social identity face, equity rights, and association rights. Second, the data were displayed in matrices to visualize relationships between strategies, formulae, and rapport violations, enabling the identification of recurring discursive patterns. Lastly, conclusions were drawn to interpret how impoliteness functioned rhetorically and strategically, revealing how it was used to assert dominance, challenge credibility, maintain surface-level decorum—ultimately reinforcing power hierarchies and veiled incivility in formal discourse.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

The analysis of 100 impolite remarks drawn from the congressional hearing of the Office of the Vice President Sara Duterte revealed recurring patterns of impoliteness strategies used by members of Congress during the hearing. Politicians used impoliteness strategies, such as bald-on record impoliteness, off-record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, and mock-politeness. Across all these strategies, various types of face and social rights were violated. Notably, Bald-on record impoliteness was the only strategy that violated all aspects of rapport management—quality face, social identity face, equity rights, and association rights. In contrast, off-record, positive, and negative impoliteness have been found to violate quality, social identity, and equity. However, mock-politeness was observed only to violate quality face and equity rights.

Table 1: Impoliteness Strategies on House Panel Hearing

Impoliteness Strategies	Violated Rapport Management	Impoliteness Formulae	Statements
Bald-On Record Impoliteness	Quality Face	Directive	HPH-C-18: I don't care who's going to submit that; I just require your department to submit it to the committee, okay?
	Social Identity Face		
	Quality Face	Open Criticism	HPH-C-78: You and the Vice President certified the correctness of the liquidation report. The two of you signed it, didn't you?
	Quality Face	Threats	HPH-C-22: You're trying to be evasive, huh? Again, we're warning you.
	Quality Face	Rejection	HPH-C-03: The worst part is that she continued to assert her position during our hearing.
Off-record Impoliteness	Equity Rights	Coercion	HPH-C-45: So, what would be the average amount you gave per week? What? You won't say? Why won't you say?
	Association Rights		HPH-C-61: If Miss Acosta were to ask for help, say, Could you please help me carry this bag to the car? — would you help?
	Quality Face	Insinuations	HPH-C-66: I'm starting to get confused. I'm beginning to think that the Disbursing Officer is Colonel Lachica.
	Social Identity Face	Veiled Blame	HPH-C-24: These accusations that our speaker intended to harm her or that he is involved in illicit activities are nothing, but unfounded and irresponsible allegations meant to distract and discredit.
	Quality Face		HPH-C-16: For me, you're concealing information, and that's a violation of our internal rules — concealment of information. So, what is it really? Did you forget because of protocol issues?
	Social Identity Face	Discourse Framing	
	Quality Face		

	Equity Rights		
	Quality Face	Rhetorical Questions	HPH-C-13: Mr. Chairman, we are talking about half a billion pesos here—how can you not remember who was driving?
Positive Impoliteness	Quality Face Equity Rights	Insults	HPH-C-74: Wait a moment. Why don't you know anything? You are the Special Disbursing Officer. You prepare the financial plan. You are the signatory in the disbursement. You prepare the liquidation. You certify. You prepare the accomplishment report. Why don't you know anything?
	Quality Face	Mockery	HPH-C-15: How can that be believable? Suddenly, there's a case of amnesia.
	Quality Face Social Identity Face	Dismissal	HPH-C-29: Desperate attempts to sow division and tarnish the reputation of an exemplary public servant.
	Quality Face	Accusations	HPH-C-93. Aren't their statements and claims suspicious?
	Quality Face	Indignation	HPH-C-95: It's very clear that this situation is not normal.
	Equity Rights	Rejection	HPH-C-31: Wait a moment, Miss Acosta. Our question pertains to the financial plan, disbursement, liquidation, certification, accomplishment. This is the entire process of utilizing the fund.
	Quality Face Equity Rights	Condescension	HPH-C-39: As a disbursement officer are you sure of what you are claiming? So, you're a regular employee? You consider yourself that?
	Quality Face Social Identity Face	Critique	HPH-C-85: But now you're telling us in this committee that you cannot pinpoint where the money went because your security officer knows more about it, even though you're supposed to be the one who knows. HPH-C-30: What I said, Miss Acosta, represents the entirety of the utilization process of confidential funds, which means, Miss Acosta, that you know from the beginning to the end what happened to the confidential fund. Is that correct?
Negative Impoliteness	Quality Face Social Identity Face	Accusation	HPH-C-11: It's not possible that you don't remember who was with you because we are talking about 125 million pesos.
	Quality Face Social Identity Face	Indignation	HPH-C-14: You don't know who was driving, you don't know the name of the security personnel—how is that possible? That's very hard to accept. I'm in a position to believe you're purposely hiding the identities of these people for reasons I do not know.
	Quality Face Social Identity Face	Critique	HPH-C-34: And what gives you the confidence that being with Assistant Secretary Antonio makes it okay?

	Equity Rights		HPH-C-46: Didn't I ask earlier about Ms. Rona's name? It's also listed in the disbursement voucher we saw earlier, isn't it?
	Quality Face Equity Rights	Dismissal	HPH-C-57: This is totally, if not completely, contradictory to the contents of the certification. HPH-C-43: I didn't ask if you agreed.
Mock-Politeness	Quality Face Equity Rights	Sarcasm	HPH-C-64: You just cashed it out—and you already have an accomplishment report? How can this be possible? HPH-C-16: For me, you're concealing information, and that's a violation of our internal rules—concealment of information. So, what is it really? Did you forget because of protocol issues?

- **Bald-on Record Impoliteness**

This strategy involved a direct, unmitigated face-threatening statement observed in the Vice President's Confidential Fund Congressional Hearing, where Congress members attacked the office of the Vice President. These remarks violated all aspects of Rapport Management—quality face, social identity face, equity rights, and association rights—and, though structured in surface-level politeness, carried with a confrontational tone that imposed authority. The intent was clearly bald-on, inflicting reputational harm through directives, open criticism, threats, rejections, and coercion.

- **Directives**

This bald-on record impoliteness imposes authority through orders that disregard the recipient's autonomy. For instance, in HPH-C-18, the phrase "I don't care" dismisses alternative perspectives, while "I just require" enforces unilateral compliance. Such directives, as exercitive, strip the addressee of agency, threatening both their quality face by implying incompetence and their social identity face by undermining the target's role within the institutional hierarchy.

- **Open Criticism**

This form of bald-on record impoliteness delivers explicit evaluative statements that corner the target into admitting fault. In HPH-C-78, the speaker frames a rhetorical trap that functions as a verdictive act, publicly casting judgment. By naming both the addressee and the Vice President, the utterance amplifies its threatening impact, directly violating quality face through accusations of incompetence and intentional wrongdoing.

- **Threats**

This bald-on impoliteness appeared as formal warnings that cloaked aggression, but implied consequences. In the hearing, like in HPH-C-22, this statement pressured the target into compliance while maintaining a professional decorum. Such utterance violated the recipient's quality face by casting doubt, leaving them vulnerable under disciplinary scrutiny, with commissive illocutionary force committing the speaker to future punitive action.

- **Rejections**

Rejection functioned by dismissing the target's statement outright, excluding them from discourse. For instance, in HPH-C-03, the act of speaking itself was condemned, not the content, effectively silencing participation. This bald-on record strategy carried an exercitive act that invalidated the Vice President's contribution, violating her quality face, reinforcing hierarchical dominance.

- **Coercion**

This bald-on record strategy emerged as a discursive strategy framed as interrogative pressure, where statements and questions functioned as a verbal trap. For example, in HPH-C-45, escalated into repeated demands, stripping the recipient of equity rights, forcing into defensive responses, while in HPH-C-61, manipulated loyalty through hypothetical scenarios. These coercive questions, exercitive in illocutionary force, pressured targets into compliance and revealed how authority exploited ordinary questions to dominate.

- **Off-Record Impoliteness**

This strategy employs indirect and ambiguous language that allows speakers to convey face-threatening remarks while maintaining plausible deniability. In the congressional hearing, such remarks appeared neutral—almost surface-level politeness—but relied on shared contextual knowledge to insinuate criticism, suspicion, or insult, shifting the burden of interpretation to the target. These instances, as presented in Table 1, observed—such as insinuations, veiled blame, discourse framing, and rhetorical questions—violated quality face, social identity face, and equity rights.

- **Insinuations**

This form of off-record impoliteness imposes negative evaluations without directly stating them, forcing the recipient to interpret suspicion or blame. In the hearing, statements like those in HPH-C-66 superficially appeared neutral but implied misconduct. As a behabitive act, it conveyed suspicion that undermined the target's professional standing, violating both quality face and social identity face by suggesting dishonesty and linking the officer to controversial financial roles.

- **Veiled Blame**

This off-record impoliteness indirectly discredits targets by framing their actions as questionable without overaccusations. For instance, in HPH-C-24, denying charges while repeating them, planting suspicion. As a verdictive act, it casts an evaluative judgment that erodes quality face and social identity face by portraying the target as irresponsible and lacking integrity, subtly manipulating public perception.

- **Discourse Framing**

This strategy frames the target in ways that presuppose guilt or failure, subtly embedding judgments within professional language. In HPH-C-16, the Speaker labels the act as

concealment, positioning the target as deceptive without issuing a direct accusation. As an expositive act, discourse framing threatens quality face, social identity face, and equity rights by undermining credibility, casting doubt on truthfulness, and asserting unequal evaluative authority.

- **Rhetorical Questions**

This strategy of off-record impoliteness uses questions not to elicit answers but to indirectly criticize or challenge the target. For example, in HPH-C-13, frames forgetfulness as incompetence. As an exercitive act, rhetorical questions exercise power while violating quality face by implying unreliability, allowing Congress to mask criticism as inquiry while delivering face-threatening acts.

- **Positive Impoliteness**

This strategy is characterized by its verbal acts that attacked the recipient's social identity and sense of belonging, aiming to damage their public image and professional legitimacy. In the congressional hearing, positive impoliteness was realized through statements that conveyed personal disdain, disapproval, and exclusion. The remarks identified under Bald-on violated all aspects of Rapport Management: *quality face, social identity face, and equity rights*. As presented in Table 1, this study has identified recurring patterns within the impoliteness formulae—such as insults, mockery, dismissal, accusation, indignation, rejection, condescension, and critique.

- **Insults**

Positive impoliteness through insults attacked competence, intelligence, and professional worth, often undermining authority and credibility. In HPH-C-74, repeated assertions of ignorance frame the officer as incompetent. It can be seen as a form of behabitive since it expresses judgments and criticisms. Though not profane, such remarks violated quality face and equity rights by stripping the recipient of competence and authority.

- **Mockery**

It is a positive impoliteness strategy that ridicules the recipient's reliability under a professional veneer, using irony to frame responses as absurd. In HPH-C-15, it treats forgetfulness as deliberate deception. It is seen as a verdictive act by publicly judging the recipient's credibility, violating the quality face while masking hostility.

- **Dismissal**

This form of positive impoliteness invalidated contributions without engagement, exercising control over who gets to speak and be heard. For instance, in HPH-C-29, *it* rejects the claim rather than addressing specifics. By enacting authority over the discourse, this is seen as an exercitive act—which greatly undermines quality face and social identity face.

- **Accusation**

This form of positive impoliteness casts suspicion through loaded, rhetorical framing that challenges moral standing while protecting the speaker's image. As seen in HPH-C-93, *it* implies dishonesty and positions the accuser as morally superior. By advancing in an evaluative position, this is exercising expositive act, threatening quality face by portraying the target as untrustworthy.

- **Indignation**

This positive impoliteness expressed disapproval toward perceived norm violations, signaling ethical condemnation and suspicion. For example, in HPH-C-95, the issue was framed as abnormal, casting doubt on credibility. Such remarks highlighted failure while maintaining professional decorum.

- **Rejection**

This positive impoliteness denied the target's credibility and right to participate, operating as a verdictive act. For example, in HPH-C-31, the Disbursing Officer's authority was dismissed. It violated the target's equity rights by excluding them from equal contribution and legitimacy in the hearing.

- **Condescension**

This form of impoliteness relied on a patronizing tone and rhetorical belittlement to diminish the target's status. An example is HPH-C-39, which questioned competence and implied inferiority. Such remarks positioned the target as unworthy of equal treatment.

- **Critique**

This strategy challenged the target's competence by exposing inconsistencies and framing them as unfit for their role, functioning as a verdictive act. For instance, in HPH-C-85, the speaker cornered the target into admitting responsibility, framing them as ineffective and unreliable. Another example is in HPH-C-30. These utterances violated quality face and social identity face by implying incompetence, denying fair negotiation, and positioning the target as inferior.

- **Negative Impoliteness**

This strategy involved discursive moves that threatened the recipient's autonomy, limiting their ability to respond freely and pressuring them into submission. In the congressional hearing, such remarks—though not always overtly aggressive—violated the concepts of quality face, social identity face, and equity rights, framing targets as incompetent and denying them equal participation. This is realized through accusations, indignation, critique, and dismissal.

- **Accusations**

Within negative impoliteness, accusations place blame or suspicion on the target, pressuring them to justify their actions without direct confrontation. Congress framed accusations as logical observations that functioned as strong face-threatening acts, undermining truthfulness and

moral standing. As seen in HPH-C-11, which implied deliberate concealment and cast doubt, this is viewed as a verdictive act that threatens the target's integrity, thereby violating the quality face and social identity face.

- **Indignation**

This manifested through moral outrage and disbelief, threatening autonomy by framing targets as deceptive or evasive without explicit insults. In HPH-C-14, this remark was observed in the OVP hearing, which pressured recipients to justify themselves while presenting the speaker as morally superior. This is realized to be an exercitive act, as it exercises power and authority. This imposed judgment indirectly accused dishonesty and violated both the quality face and the social identity face.

- **Critique**

Critique functioned as an indirect challenge to competence and judgment, framing evaluative questions that questioned credibility while maintaining surface politeness. Congress members used this strategy to undermine authority and expose inconsistencies. It is seen as a verdictive act, as observed in HPH-C-34 and HPH-C-46, the speaker positioned the recipients as incapable. Casting doubt on reasoning and denying equity rights by limiting the target's ability to respond. Dismissal. This operates by invalidating the target's statements without engagement, minimizing the authority. In HPH-C-57 and HPH-C-43, dismissal was used to strip the OVP of credibility and restrict their participation. This is a verdictive act that rejects the claim, undermining reliability and violating both quality face and equity rights.

- **Dismissal**

This operates by invalidating the target's statements without engagement, minimizing the authority. In HPH-C-57 and HPH-C-43, dismissal was used to strip the OVP of credibility and restrict their participation. This is a verdictive act that rejects the claim, undermining reliability and violating both quality face and equity rights.

- **Mock-politeness**

This strategy appeared polite on the surface but carried undertones of criticism, ridicule, or disbelief. Mock-politeness functioned in the hearing as a discursive trap that maintained professional decorum. By exploiting the contrast between form and function, mock-politeness attacked competence indirectly. Statements observed in the formulae of mock-politeness violated quality face and equity rights. As shown in Table 1, this was often realized through sarcasm.

- **Sarcasm**

Sarcasm, as mock-politeness, ridiculed targets with ironic remarks that appeared polite but carried pointed criticism. Its illocutionary force is behabitive, expressing disapproval through ridicule, as in HPH-C-64, which attacked competence by framing the claim as absurd. Another instance is in HPH-C-16, imposing guilt under the guise of humor, undermining credibility, and

violating both quality face and equity rights by denying the recipient equal footing in the discourse.

3.1.2 The Functions of Impoliteness in the Congressional Hearing

In the congressional hearing on the Vice President's Confidential Fund issue, impolite remarks performed three main functions—*affective*, *coercive*, and *entertaining*—across various strategies. These functions shaped power dynamics, reinforced dominance, and influenced public perception of the Vice President and her associates. Rather than isolated acts, they were embedded in tone and structure, making impoliteness a strategic resource in political discourse.

- **Affective**

Affective impoliteness was expressed through emotionally charged statements designed to provoke, blame, or destabilize targets. This function appeared in bald-on off-record, positive, negative, and mock-politeness strategies (see Table 1). For instance, HPH-C-74 conveyed frustration and disdain, casting the officer as ignorant. While procedural in form, the delivery emphasized emotional intensity, pressuring the recipient and eroding credibility through public embarrassment.

- **Coercive**

The coercive function was expressed through statements that asserted dominance, imposed pressure, or manipulated the interaction between speaker and recipient, with the intent to extract information or control the target's responses. Found across all strategies except mock-politeness, coercion exploited authority to corner the office into defensive positions (see Table 1). This is evident in HPH-C-45, where repeated interrogation coerces a response under pressure, compelling recipients to justify themselves or risk reputational damage.

- **Entertaining**

An impoliteness event that is unusual for its impolite manner. In this study, humor has been observed to be weaponized in congressional hearings by exploiting power dynamics, functioning not simply for comical relief, but to damage someone's reputation. Congresses employ two impoliteness strategies that were observed to be used in an entertaining tone—positive impoliteness and mock-politeness (see Table 1), as seen in HPH-C-15, making their statements more engaging for the audience, rather than engaging in heated argument exchanges.

3.2 Discussion

Impoliteness in the OVP congressional hearing was not merely a breakdown of norms, but a political tool for confrontation, blame, and face-threatening acts. As Shuy (2010) notes, language can function as a crime when it damages reputation in institutional contexts. The data revealed varied strategies—bald-on record, off-record, positive, negative, and mock-politeness—used to discredit the Vice President's office. Bald-on record emerged as the most aggressive, violating all four aspects of rapport management (Spencer-Oatey 2008), while other strategies infringed

on fewer aspects. Echoing Locher and Watts (2005), hostility was masked by formal decorum to reinforce dominance and reputational damage. To substantiate them, the impoliteness strategies along with their violated rapport and impoliteness functions are discussed below:

3.2.1. Impoliteness Strategies in the Congressional Hearing on the Vice President Sara's Confidential Fund

Bald-on Record Impoliteness. In the OVP Congressional Hearing, bald-on record impoliteness was performed through formal yet unmitigated statements, producing calculated reputational damage while maintaining decorum. Unlike Afful's (2017) findings on overt radio confrontations or Mohammed and Abbas's (2016) emphasis on explicit literary aggression, the hearing reflected authority and power. This pattern challenges the assumption that bald-on record is inherently direct and aggressive, instead supporting Culpeper's (2016) view that impoliteness adapts dynamically, where formality itself can be weaponized for authority and reputational harm. This expands the nuances that are detailed in the following subcategories:

- **Directive**

In the congressional hearing, directives functioned not as neutral instructions but as calculated moves to assert dominance while cloaked in formal decorum. Unlike Suhartono *et al.*'s (2018) findings, which aimed to preserve respect through negative politeness, or Hidayat *et al.*'s (2021) classroom context, where blunt commands disrupted rapport, the directives in this study were strategically polite yet coercive. This supports Culpeper *et al.*'s (2010) argument that impoliteness can be socially tolerated in formal settings, demonstrating how directives regulate participation while maintaining institutional professionalism.

- **Open Criticism**

Open criticism appeared in a professional tone but strategically discredited recipients, embedding reputational harm within neutral phrasing. This aligns with Shevchenko *et al.* (2021), who described criticism as authority-undermining while masked by civility, and Wu *et al.* (2020), who emphasized its rhetorical role in shaping public perceptions. However, this study extends those insights, revealing that criticisms functioned as a deliberate act of discursive positioning, reinforcing congressional authority while positioning targets as untrustworthy. Thus, criticism acted both as a rhetorical manipulation and a reputational attack under professional restraint.

- **Threats**

Threats in this study were framed as procedural warnings rather than overt sanctions, exerting authority without breaking decorum. This supports Hansson's (2024) observation that institutional threats serve as blame-avoidance tactics, and Ali's (2021) finding that authority uses indirect pressure to compel compliance. Unlike explicit aggression, threats here subtly restructured rapport, placing the office in a defense role while sustaining congressional dominance. In this way, threats functioned as relationally oppressive tools that concealed institutional control within a performance of neutrality and professionalism.

- **Rejection**

Rejection was employed to exclude the OVP's Disbursing Officers and include the Vice President by framing their contributions as inappropriate or irrelevant. This echoes Dynel's (2015) observation of rejection in high-stakes discourse as authority reinforcement, but contrasts with Afful's (2017) finding that institutional rejections may streamline interaction without hostility. In the hearing, rejection redefined roles, stripping legitimacy and credibility from the targets, manipulating rapport to sustain hierarchy, and functioning as a rhetorical tool to silence people.

- **Coercion**

Coercion in the hearing operated through escalating interrogatives that framed silence as guilt, exerting pressure under rhetorical neutrality. This resonates with Moston and Fisher's (2007) view of institutional coercion as persistent questioning and Culpeper's (2011) framing of coercion as indirect pressure. Yet, unlike traditional interpretations, controlling both pace and framing reshaped roles to weaponize discourse as a subtle yet powerful means of dominance.

- **Off-record Impoliteness**

In the congressional hearing, the off-record functioned as indirect, yet hostile attacks, masked by neutral and ambiguous phrasing. Unlike Bobin's (2011) interpretation of restrained intensity, these utterances strategically eroded credibility while maintaining civility, aligning with Dynel's (2015) view of face-attacks in political discourse. This extends Culpeper's (2016) concept by showing how institutional authority amplifies off-record strategies, trapping targets into silence that appears as guilt. Thus, off-record operations damage reputation, manipulating both institutional interactions and public perception.

- **Insinuations**

In the hearing, this strategy appeared as neutral statements that subtly implied untrustworthiness, damaging the office's credibility under a professional tone. This aligns with Dynel's (2015) claim that insinuations bypass constraints in political discourse, while Shuy's (2010) highlights their defamatory force. This study extends those findings by showing how congressional hearing authority can restructure rapport to inflict reputational harm through the guise of civility.

- **Veiled Blame**

Veiled blame appeared as neutral remarks implying misconduct, positioning the OVP officers as irresponsible without over accusations. This reflects Dynel's (2015) insight that blame emerges between intention and interpretation, illustrating how authority frames blame to erode trust. Hansson (2024) notes that blame often appears through sarcasm, but here it was cloaked in civility, becoming a rhetorical trap that compels targets into self-defense without direct accusation.

- **Discourse Framing**

Congress members shaped discourse to embed guilt within seemingly neutral inquiries, influencing audience interpretation while avoiding direct accusations. This supports Shuy's (2010) view of framing as a form of rhetorical manipulation and Leggitt and Gibbs's (2000) finding that framing relies on shared expectations. Yet, this study shows that framing more aggressively restructures roles, denies negotiation of rights, and demonstrates how political hearings weaponize neutrality to assert control and enact reputational harm.

- **Rhetorical Questions**

Rhetorical questions challenged the OVP not to elicit answers but to imply incompetence and evasiveness under the guise of inquiry. This aligns with Bousfield's (2008) view of cloaked aggression in questioning and Zhang *et al.*'s (2017) insight that rhetorical questions undermine opposition. This study extends those insights by showing that such questioning can strip the target of their ability to defend themselves. Ultimately, rhetorical questions served as covert tools of control, enforcing dominance and authority.

- **Positive Impoliteness**

In the OVP hearing, positive impoliteness functioned as a calculated performance, employing formal language to undermine self-image through exclusion and embarrassment while maintaining decorum. These findings align with those of Wijayanto *et al.* (2017) and Yadav (2022), who noted ridicule and dominance as key features; however, this study extends their insights by demonstrating that political impoliteness serves as a deliberate strategy. Following Culpeper (2011), the findings highlight how positive impoliteness functions rhetorically, weaponizing professionalism to inflict reputational harm.

- **Insults**

Insults in the hearing were structured to question credibility, embedding judgment in professional phrasing. This aligns with Alvanoudi's (2024) view that insults target social identity; however, the findings extend her insights by showing that even veiled judgments can achieve similar face threats. Likewise, Bousfield (2008) views insult as a power move, and here it appears as a form of rhetorical control. Thus, insults weaponized neutral language to damage reputation.

- **Mockery**

Mockery remarks were exaggerated statements presented as humor, intended to discredit the OVP while masking underlying hostility. This corresponds with Rythoven's (2022) insight that mockery questions rationality and Saeki and O'Keefe's (2006) argument that it rejects social standing. Yet this study extends Culpeper's (2011) nuance, showing mockery as a calculated performance to position the office as a laughingstock. In this way, mockery strategically undermines legitimacy.

Dismissal. Dismissal in the hearing appeared to minimize OVP statements, signalling irrelevance without counterargument. This reflects Terkourafi's (2008) view of dismissal as

implicature-based control and Hansson's (2024) point that it enables blame-avoidance. Extending Culpeper's (2011) claim that impoliteness relies on relational cues, this analysis demonstrates that it can be a narrative manipulation that restructures discourse authority.

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- **Indignation**

In the congressional hearing, it is expressed as calm, rational disapproval framed as objective judgment, concealing moral condemnation in a professional tone. This supports Schreiber *et al.*'s (2025) finding that indignation enforces norms through moral superiority. Yet, this study extends that showing indignation as controlled and reputationally damaging, following Bousfield's (2008) insights that reshaped participation and hierarchy.

- **Rejection**

The OVP Congressional Hearing observed rejection as a calculated denial of the OVP officers' relevance, which subtly undermined their credibility. This aligns with Saeki and O'Keefe's (2006) view that rejection reinforces authority by excluding opposing statements, and with Babaii's (2018) observation that it serves as a narrative tool. However, this study extends those findings, showing that it can publicly withhold recognition and work as a discursive tool for authority.

- **Condescension**

Condescension was conveyed through overly formal language, which masked superiority while subtly undermining the Office of the Vice President. These utterances implied incompetence under the guise of politeness, consistent with Dacalanio *et al.* (2024) and Thapar-Björkert *et al.* (2016), who viewed condescension as a form of symbolic aggression that reinforces hierarchy. Yet, this study goes beyond showing that such polite-sounding judgments stripped the target of equal footing. As Bousfield (2008) suggests, the strategy reaffirmed dominance by reshaping rapport, positioning the speaker as unquestionable.

- **Critique**

Critique remarks functioned as evaluative judgments framed as inquiry, questioning the OVP's competence and accountability. This aligns with Diani's (2018) finding that critique is a dominance move, while Suwignyo *et al.* (2024) observed it as a disguised inquiry that is difficult to contest. However, this study extends those findings by showing that critique's relational

cues—reshaping rapport (Spencer-Oatey 2005) —redefine authority and legitimacy within the discourse, undermining credibility while sustaining professionalism.

- **Negative Impoliteness**

Negative impoliteness in the congressional hearing appeared not as overt aggression, but as a strategic move veiled in formal language meant to silence the Office of the Vice President. These findings align with García-Pastor's (2008) claim that such strategies weaken opponents through ambiguity, yet Harris (2001) notes their acceptability when embedded in institutional norms. Building on Culpeper (2016), the findings reveal that negative impoliteness functions most powerfully when cloaked in civility, thereby limiting equal footing and asserting authority.

- **Accusation**

Accusations emerged in formal questioning that framed OVP officers as evasive, dishonest, or negligent, leaving little space for justification. Unlike Roulet and Pichler (2020), who found accusations in media interviews to be overtly confrontational, here they were institutionalized, maintaining professional restraint. Shuy (2010) highlights how calculated accusations carry defamatory implications, a feature that is strongly present in the hearing. Thus, accusations operated as guilt-structured discourse, simultaneously denying defense, shaping interpretation, and reinforcing dominance under the guise of procedural inquiry.

- **Indignation**

Indignation was expressed through controlled, assertive disapproval, framed as ethical judgment rather than emotional outburst. This resonates with Mihailov *et al.* (2023), who view indignation as enforcing norms, and Kienpointner (2008), who situates it as a rhetorical tool in politics. Yet, this study extends those insights by showing indignation's strength lies in its restrained tone, which pressures targets into defensive justification. Supporting Locher and Watts (2005), indignation here was not mere disapproval but a face-threatening act cloaked in professionalism, subtly restructuring authority and rapport.

- **Critique**

Evaluative remarks targeted the OVP's competence, framed as inquiries carrying implicit judgment while maintaining civility. Swaine (2020) observed that such a critique undermines reasoning without overt confrontation, while Watts (2009) emphasized that its force derives from interpretation. This study extends those insights by showing critique as a rhetorical tool of control—placing recipients in positions where defense reinforces criticism. Echoing Locher and Watts (2005), critique functioned relationally, subtly discrediting credibility under the guise of professionalism, reshaping power dynamics, and reinforcing asymmetry in institutional discourse.

- **Dismissal**

Dismissal was conveyed in abrupt acknowledgments that erased OVP officers' contributions without overt disagreement. This aligns with Haugh (2013), who defines dismissal as a face-

threatening disruption, and Oteng Acheampong and Kwarteng (2021), who note its role in reinforcing hierarchy. Yet, the study extends these insights by showing that dismissal is a discursive verdict framed procedurally—sidelining targets while preserving decorum. Consistent with Bousfield (2008), dismissal here subtly restructured the power balance, rendering recipients irrelevant and positioning speakers as authoritative, all under the guise of professionalism.

- **Mock-Politeness**

In the OVP Congressional Hearing, mock-politeness was realized through formally appropriate utterances that masked ridicule and discrediting intent. Congress members relied on tone, phrasing, and rhetorical exaggeration to appear professional while subtly embedding face threats. Taylor (2016) emphasizes the contrast between form and function, where respectful delivery conceals shaming intent—a feature echoed in the hearing. Extending Culpeper's (2011) view, mock-politeness here operated as a discursive trap, leaving targets little choice but compliance, reinforcing institutional power while maintaining the appearance of civility.

- **Sarcasm**

Sarcasm emerged as a rhetorical tool embedded in formally polite language yet loaded with ridicule. While humorous on the surface, these remarks positioned OVP officers as laughable, aligning with Attardo's (2000) view of sarcasm sharpening criticism through irony. Similarly, Dynel (2016) frames sarcasm as a strategic play between literal and intended meaning, a feature evident in the hearing. Extending Locher and Watts (2005), this study shows sarcasm as co-constructed through audience laughter, weaponizing humor to undermine credibility, control discourse, and reinforce hierarchy without overt hostility.

3.2.2 The Functions of Impoliteness in the Congressional Hearing

The OVP Congressional Hearing revealed impoliteness as a discursive tool serving affective, coercive, and entertaining functions. As Culpeper (2011) and Anshari *et al.* (2023) note, impoliteness events impose authority, emotion, and sarcasm to destabilize targets. In this case, impoliteness was systematically interwoven into political discourse, reinforcing dominance, judgment, and exclusion while maintaining professional decorum.

- **Affective**

Affective impoliteness was strategically employed to provoke and destabilize OVP officers, not as emotional slip-ups but as calculated attacks. Theresia and Nina (2024) and Fortunata (2024) emphasize how affective impoliteness thrives in authoritative exchanges, while Humprecht *et al.* (2024) highlight its hostile effects. Building on Culpeper (2011), this study demonstrates that emotional provocation can be masked beneath professional formality, thereby amplifying the discrediting effects without overt aggression.

- **Coercive**

Coercive impoliteness appeared as institutionalized control, shaping participation and limiting the OVP's legitimacy. Culpeper (2011) frames coercion as manipulation, while Abbas and Mohammed (2015) note its embedding in discourse to sustain dominance. In the hearing, coercion regulated who could speak, how, and under what terms, showing it as less spontaneous hostility and more a calculated strategy of authority.

- **Entertaining**

Humor was used not for levity but as strategic impoliteness to mock and exclude the OVP. Holmes (2000) identifies such "soft aggression" as humor masking discrediting effects, while Abbas and Al-Majdawi (2018) and Kadhum and Abbas (2021) stress its exploitative, less detectable nature. In this study, entertainment served as a covert tool of reputational harm, reinforcing exclusion while appearing socially acceptable.

4. Conclusions

Based on our findings, impoliteness strategies in political discourse are not just blunt face-threatening verbal attacks but rather operate as a communicative choice that becomes a tool for control and dominance. The implications of educational procedures highlight the impoliteness that was used while maintaining professionalism towards the Office of the Vice President's confidential fund, offering valuable insights for real-world applications. These implications involve using methods applying linguistic knowledge alongside impoliteness theory to reduce interpersonal problems and promote more constructive discourse in real-world applications. To further see the immensity of this study's reach, below are the implications for educational purposes:

The findings of this study emphasize the critical use of language in shaping communication. This reveals how strategically veiled impoliteness is utilized in formal interaction, while maintaining a guise of politeness. This is to raise sensitivity and acquire the skills in interpreting how language is used, necessary to understand real-world discourse with a critical understanding. Additionally, this study encourages the integration of fostering critical language awareness through seminars and academic curricula, highlighting how socio-pragmatics and impoliteness theory—alongside illocutionary force and rapport management—equip the students with the ability to interpret how language was used to reveal intent, manage conflict, and reinforce power. By examining impoliteness strategies such as bald-on record impoliteness, off-record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, and mock-politeness, and understanding the functions of impoliteness—*affective, coercive, and entertaining*—students can decode language use and recognize veiled hostility in surface-level polite remarks even in professional settings. In the short term, seminars can raise awareness of how language shapes accountability and rapport; in the long term, integrating these concepts into pragmatics and applied linguistic curricula ensures learners gain interpretive skills necessary for understanding real-world discourse with greater precision and critical understanding.

Overall, this study has demonstrated that impoliteness in political discourse goes far beyond surface-level interpersonal conflict; it is a complex, strategic, and discursively constructed phenomenon rooted in social power. Through a socio-pragmatic lens, the analysis has shown how language is used not only to communicate but to assert dominance, shape public perception, and influence situations. For what was spoken was only half the story; the real meaning lay in how it was used, why it was said, and how it was made to appear neutral, while wounding all the same. This study serves as a reminder that language is never neutral; it can be a force for preserving or destroying. In doing so, it offers comprehensive insights not just for the academic field of linguistics, but also for education, politics, and everyday human interactions, where language becomes essential for responsible and ethical communication.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Jay C. Britos, Marlon James Erjon L. Miras, and Arron Vincent S. Villaraiz are students from the College of Teacher Education under the Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) major in English program at the University of Mindanao, Davao City, Philippines.

Email: j.britos.533566@umindanao.edu.ph

Christian Jay O. Syting serves as their research adviser and associate professor. He is a College Instructor at the College of Teacher Education, University of Mindanao, Davao City, Philippines.

Email: christianjay_syting@umindanao.edu.ph

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