

Impoliteness Found in *I Care a Lot* Movie

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Abstract

The Impoliteness in movies serves as a narrative device to develop characters, create conflict, and reflect real-life social interactions. Applying Culpeper's impoliteness strategies, this research analyses the strategies, functions, and implications of impoliteness in *I Care a Lot* movie. The data were taken from the film scripts. The results show that five strategies of impoliteness are found in this movie. They include bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and withhold politeness. Positive impoliteness is the most dominant strategy found in the movie (41.2%). This strategy targets someone's approving face, showing disrespect for something in the interaction. Due to the functions, the most frequent function of impoliteness is coercive impoliteness (58,82%). This indicates that the impolite utterances found in the movie are used to pressure, control, or coerce the interlocutor. The findings suggest that impoliteness in movies is essential in establishing power dynamics and character development. This research contributes to socio-pragmatics by providing insights into how strategies of impoliteness can be applied in communication, including film, to create conflict and tension.

Keywords: impoliteness; strategies; implications; communication; face.

A. INTRODUCTION

Impoliteness refers to behaviour or language considered rude, disrespectful, or inappropriate in each social context, which can harm someone's self-esteem. This is significantly inversely proportional to the theory of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987:55), which discusses how a person communicates to maintain social harmony. Impoliteness often means a clash with expectations, particularly concerning behaviours associated with a particular context. More precisely, expectations may contribute to people's perceptions of appropriacy (Culpeper, 2011:14). In addition, this form of impoliteness includes verbal behaviour such as insults, mockery, humiliation, or nonverbal actions that are perceived as an attitude of dignity or depletion of dignity.

Impoliteness deserves more attention in the new age of digital communication. Social media, email, and communication engines are integral to modern life; this problem often arises during social interaction. Without realizing it, when we communicate, it can indirectly happen. For example, "No wonder you don't have any friends." From this example, this offends someone's

social situation by suggesting that the person does not deserve to have friends. It can be very damaging to the recipient's self-esteem.

This shows that impoliteness is critical to understand because it explains power dynamics and social norms in human interactions (Hassan et al., 2023). Understanding impoliteness also enhances communication competence, especially in making us aware of the psychological impact of impolite behaviour. Thus, studying impoliteness allows us to be more sensitive to others' feelings, avoid unnecessary conflicts, and create better communication. The main home for the study of impoliteness is socio-pragmatics, a branch of linguistic pragmatics and a field that melds into several other fields, still, most notably, communication studies and interactional sociolinguistics (Culpeper, 2011:5). The meaning and impact of an act of impoliteness are highly dependent on the context of the speaker's perception and the addressee. This study focuses on how impoliteness is expressed and how it is impacted in socio-pragmatics. This study emphasizes how factors such as social status and communication situations influence impolite actions and the interpretation of those actions that shape the understanding and response to impoliteness in human interaction.

Several studies have been conducted to discuss impoliteness strategies. Impoliteness strategies in the movie focusing on how these strategies reflect and amplify social dynamics like power, gender, and conflict were carried out by Mulyadi et al. (2024); Şekerci (2023); and Simanjuntak & Ambalegin (2022). In addition, there were other studies of impoliteness strategies in TV shows and TV series (Hafisa & Hanidar, 2021; Milal & Pramono, 2021; Santoso & Tedjaatmadja, 2022). These studies show that impoliteness is often used to assert power, maintain dominance, or challenge authority. Several researchers focused on the analyses of impoliteness strategies in social media (Anwar et al., 2021; Siahaan et al., 2023 ; Kaulika et al., 2024 ; Septiawan et al., 2025 ; Afriana & Mubarak, 2024). All studies show how impoliteness is used strategically to provoke responses online and entertain audiences in the media. Previous research also studied impoliteness in politics (Akporokah & Ifechelobi, 2023; Hassan et al., 2023) and in academic correspondence (Caldero & Sun, 2021). These studies underscore the strategic use of impoliteness in various contexts: political discourse, online interactions, academic correspondence, and media representations influenced by cultural norms and specific communication contexts. Impoliteness also deals with the use of taboo words. As investigated by Mahayana et al. (2023), taboo words which are carelessly used can harm the listeners.

In line with the previous research, this study also examines the impoliteness of structure. The purpose of this study is to focus on the gap in the lack of focus on the impact of impoliteness on interpersonal relationships and emotional responses. Although research has categorized and identified impoliteness strategies, it rarely explores the implications or social consequences for the targets of impoliteness. The result contributes to socio-pragmatics and this lack of attention to the real effects of impoliteness opened an opportunity to research its broader influence on behaviour and perception. This research hopefully provides new insights into the representation of audiences' impact in the media context.

Based on the illustration above, research on impoliteness strategies has been conducted frequently, only a few research investigated the impact of impoliteness. Deploying Culpeper (2011) and Brown & Levinson (1987), this present study analyses the impoliteness strategies in the film *I Care a Lot*. The film is a dark comedy featuring various instances of impoliteness throughout the dialogue. This research focuses on how the main characters in the book, such as Marla Grayson, use impoliteness to hurt others' feelings and take advantage of them.

B. METHOD

Methods of research play an important role in scientific work. This present study is qualitative research. Qualitative method is an approach to understanding the deep meanings that individuals or groups give to a social problem or phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It aims to provide and recognize a systematic data collection and analysis framework, focusing on understanding phenomena, producing valid data, and developing theory. Thus, research methods help ensure that research is conducted in a structured manner. This research was carried out through some procedures.

The data of this research were taken from the movie *I Care a Lot*, released in 2020 and directed by J Blakeson. The movie debuted globally on September 12, 2020, at the 45th Toronto International Film Festival. Depending on the area, it was available for streaming on Netflix and Amazon Prime Video on February 19, 2021. Critics gave the film favourable reviews, and Pike was awarded Best Actress in a Motion Picture - Comedy or Musical at the 78th Golden Globe Awards. The film also features a rich tapestry of disrespectful behaviour from its main characters

The method applied in collecting data is observations carried out by note-taking technique that focuses on collecting words or sentences of impoliteness. The first step in collecting data is to watch the movie and read the film *I Care a Lot* script found on Netflix. The data were taken from the speech, actions, abuse of power, and behaviour of the characters in the dialogue that exemplify impolite interactions. The next step is identifying the utterances and behaviours, observing the interlocutor's response, and classifying the dialogue based on the impoliteness strategy, the function of using impoliteness, and inferring the response and impact of the utterance that shows impoliteness. This research aims to create a comprehensive data set that reflects this study's impoliteness dynamics by systematically collecting these data points.

The steps in analysing data consist of two stages. Firstly, the framework of Culpeper (2011) was applied to analyse the strategies and functions of impoliteness and Brown & Levinson's (1987) was to pinpoint and classify the incidence of impoliteness in the movie and explain the results in a detailed report to answer the research questions. It was carried out by relating the language used and its context. Secondly, tables and figures are presented to show the characters' frequency and types of impoliteness, providing a summary to understand power dynamics and relationships. In addition, the research investigates how impoliteness impacts characters' perceptions, evaluating its impact on moral judgment and emotional responses, especially regarding empathy towards the characters. This integrated method thoroughly identifies the tactics and their broader effects on media stories.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis, several results of this research were examined using the impoliteness strategy. They are bald on record, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and withhold politeness. Due to the functions, there are affective, coercive, and entertaining. The implication consists of form-driven, convention-driven, and context-driven. This classification could illustrate how the characters strategically use impoliteness and its function in their interactions. The table below shows the total amount of data found in the movie.

Table 1. Table Impoliteness Strategy

Impoliteness Strategies	Qt	Percentage
Bald on Record	1	2,9%
Positive Impoliteness	1	41,2%
Negative Impoliteness	1	35,3%
Sarcasm or Mock Politeness	3	8,8%
Withhold Politeness	4	11,8%

Table 2. Table Impoliteness Function

Impoliteness	Q	Percentage
Affective	1	38,23%
Coercive	2	58,82%
Entertaining	1	2,94

Bald on Record Impoliteness

Bald on record is a strategy of impoliteness done bluntly or directly to the interlocutor without smoothing the message. The speaker expresses the words clearly and unambiguously, which can make the interlocutor uncomfortable. The following is the data found in the movie.

(1:04:09 – 1:04:18)

Fran : We're gonna get trapped in it.

Marla : Well, maybe, but maybe not.

Fran : They brought guns into a care home. They're the Russian mafia, Marla.

Marla : Ex-Russian mafia.

Fran : **Marla, pack a fucking bag.**

In the scene above, when Marla and Fran received news that their colleague had died due to Roman's actions, Fran felt like running away. While Fran was packing her bags, Marla insisted on not following Fran's orders. This frustrated Fran, and they gave a harsh order to Marla, who tried to convince Fran that what Fran feared would not happen. In the dialogue, there is a statement, "Marla, pack a fucking bag." spoken by Fran and he used unambiguous without disguising or softening her speech; the use of the word "fucking" further emphasizes that the utterance does not pay attention to politeness and displays aggressive assertiveness. This strategy occurs when someone speaks directly, without mitigation or attempts to maintain politeness. In context, this shows that Fran is directly conveying an order with the aim of immediate action.

The utterance contained in this dialogue includes the affective function because there is a situation where Fran is experiencing high emotional pressure due to her panic. In the dialogue, there is the word "fucking" which serves to vent the emotions created by fear and panic. Fran felt that the situation was getting more dangerous because they were dealing with the Russian mafia, so her reaction became more emotional. The use of impolite words in her statement also reflects Fran's feelings of anxiety and frustration.

Positive Impoliteness

Positive impoliteness is a strategy of targeting someone's approving face, which shows one's disrespect for something in the interaction. This strategy is delivered using ambiguous words

or taboo words that show one's unsympathy, thus making the target feel uncomfortable with the situation.

(06:40 – 06:59)

[Feldstrom rushes angrily toward Marla.]

Feldstrom : **Hey! Bitch. You! Bitch!**

Fran : I think he's talking to you.

Marla : Then he can use my name.

Feldstro : Bitch! Hey! I don't know how you live with yourself. Okay? Our lives are being ruined.

Marla : I'm just doing my job.

Feldstrom : **Your-- Your-- Your fucking job? Fuck you! Hey! Hey! I hope you get raped, and I hope you get murdered, and I hope you get killed!**

This conversation illustrates Feldstrom who spoke to Marla Grayson in court angrily after failing to regain custody of his mother. Feldstrom believed that Marla's activities, which included legally but unethically taking over guardianship of his mother for his benefit, had ruined his life. Feldstrom started in a very passionate mood, saying the taboo word, “Hey! Bitch” which is used to call Marla, thus giving the impression of demeaning someone in public. After that, when he said, “Your job--your job? Fuck you!” This use of taboo words gives the impression that there is no sympathy for the interlocutor's profession. The climax of the dialogue occurs when Feldstrom said, “Hey! Hey! I hope you get raped, and I hope you get murdered, and I hope you get murdered!” where he swore unkindly at Marla, which shows his disinterest in her. This entire dialogue is an example of positive impoliteness as each utterance is delivered blatantly without any attempt to tone it down. This dialogue also falls under affective impoliteness, which uses impoliteness to express heightened emotions when the target is to blame. The impolite words in the dialogue, such as “Fuck you!” and “I hope you get murdered!” function as a form of uncontrolled anger release (Mahayana et al., 2023). Where the speaker feels he has no other way to channel his emotions other than with explicit verbal aggression.

Negative impoliteness

Negative impoliteness is one of the strategies that attack someone's negative face. This strategy aims to harm the interlocutor with negative speech, such as insulting or treating someone not seriously. It is often used when the speaker wants to assert his authority or his stance on a matter. This strategy can also have negative consequences, such as damaging a relationship, causing irritation, or other conflicts. Some data that fall under this strategy include:

(1:05:57 – 1:06:53)

Marla : Is Alexi your son?

Jennifer : What? No. That idiot.

Marla : But you are connected to the Russian mafia?

Jennifer : He'll kill you next. I mean, that is unless you get me out of here now. Then he might let you live.

[Marla remained speechless]

Marla : Jennifer, listen to me carefully. I don't lose. I won't lose. I'm never letting you go. **I own you. And I will drain you of your money, your comfort, and your self-respect.**

The conversation above shows the dialogue between Jennifer and Marla when Marla visited Jennifer at the care home. At that time, Marla questioned how Jennifer was doing and asked if the one who had tried to take her away the previous day was Alexi. However, Jennifer denied it, which made Marla even more curious because she had connections with the Russian mafia. So, Jennifer said, “He'll kill you next. I mean, that is unless you get me out of here now. Then he might let you live.” This means that Marla could be the target of the Russian mafia if she doesn't let Jennifer go. The words were replied to by Marla, who was silent, transfixed by what Jennifer said, so she said, “Jennifer, listen to me carefully. I don't lose. I won't lose. I'm never letting you go. I own you. And I will drain you of your money, your comfort, and your self-respect.” The words said by Marla are included in negative impoliteness because they are contained in the sentence, “I own you. And I will drain you of your money, your comfort, and your self-respect.” This shows how Marla shows her power as a guardian who can do anything to Jennifer and not threaten her seriously at the care home.

Marla's dialogue includes the function of coercive impoliteness because it intends to intimidate the interlocutor with emphasis. This is shown by the bold words in the dialogue, which show Marla's dominance and power as her guardian, that she can do anything to Jennifer's life.

Sarcasm or Mock Politeness

Sarcasm or mock politeness is a strategy that focuses on using politeness strategies that are clearly insincere and thus only appear to remain a surface realization. It can be used to express the opposite feeling, which means it does not convey the speaker's true meaning.

(09:31 – 09:34)

Marla : Fuck. Now, I have to cash him out and turn over everything to his inheritors. What a fucking waste. [on the phone]

Sam : **Maybe he took a shine to you and wrote you into his will.** [laughs]

Marla : Yeah, right. [laughs]

Dialogue between Sam and Marla occurred when Sam told Marla that Alan Levitt, his client, was declared dead. Marla said, “Fuck. Now, I have to cash him out and turn over everything to his inheritors. What a fucking waste.” The dialogue states that Marla must take care of her heirs. But this is followed by Sam saying, “Maybe he took a shine on you and wrote you into his will.” The sentence sarcastically shows clearly insincere that Alan's death was because he liked Marla, his guardian, and by law, if Alan dies, Marla will become his heir. This is not the case, as Marla became Alan's guardian against Alan's wishes. Marla manipulated all access to get guardianship from the state court legally. The dialogue conveys the entertaining impoliteness function because Sam said, “Maybe he took a shine to you and wrote you into his will.” Sam said these words while laughing, and Marla replied, “Yeah, right.” This states that this interaction functions as entertainment for mutual enjoyment.

Withhold Politeness

Withhold politeness is an impolite strategy where the interlocutor does not answer or give the expected polite attitude to the speaker to show disrespect to the interlocutor. Data that falls under this strategy is as the following.

(27:19 – 27:40)

Alexi : Taxi for Ms. Peterson.

Fran : Oh, she doesn't live here anymore.
 Alexi : What?
 Fran : She moved. Ms. Peterson moved.
 Alexi : Oh. My mistake. Thank you.
 Fran : **Excuse me. Who called you? Excuse me!**
 [Alexi immediately got back into his taxi.]

In the conversation above, withhold impoliteness is used by the characters between Alexi and Fran. The dialogue occurred when Alexi picked up Jennifer by disguising himself as a taxi driver because he is the son of a mafia boss. However, when he arrived at Jennifer's residence, he saw that her house was for sale. So, that made Alexi curious. Peeping into the house through the window, he found that the home was being renovated and that Jennifer's belongings were not there. When Fran said, "Oh, she doesn't live here anymore." Alexi replied in surprise by saying, "What?" then Fran emphasized the statement again by saying, "She moved. Ms. Peterson moved." This made Alexi confused, and they did not expect Jennifer not to be in the house and said, "Oh. My mistake. Thank you." Then Fran remembered that the care home confiscated Jennifer's cell phone, and she wondered how she could contact the taxi driver and asked, "Excuse me. Who called you? Excuse me!" but Alexi did not provide polite expressions that are usually expected in certain social situation, and he immediately returned to his taxi.

This dialogue belongs to effective impoliteness function because it shows indifference to the interlocutor. Alexi expresses confusion and does not expect Jennifer to be at her residence. This makes him curious and upset about Jennifer's whereabouts.

Table 3. Table Impoliteness Implication

Impoliteness Implication	Q	Percentage
Form-driven	6	17,6
Convention-driven	1	44,1
Context-driven	1	38,2

Form-driven

Form-driven impoliteness implication in context leads to a trigger based on a form of impoliteness, implicature, or inference. It involves intonation and word choice to imply impoliteness. It thus refers to implicit messages triggered by formal aspects of behavior and has negative consequences for specific individuals. The following is the data found in a movie.

(1:04:09 – 1:04:18)
 Fran : We're gonna get trapped in it.
 Marla : Well, maybe, but maybe not.
 Fran : They brought guns into a care home. They're the Russian mafia, Marla.
 Marla : Ex-Russian mafia.
 Fran : **Marla, pack a fucking bag.**

In this example, the bald on record impoliteness represents form-driven impoliteness because its structure inherently provokes rudeness. Direct and impolite language, combined with intonation, heightens the situation's urgency and reflects the character's intense frustration. This is particularly evident in words like "pack a fucking bag," which are inherently offensive regardless

of social context. As a result, it leads to negative consequences, implying decision-making that appears rushed and inappropriate for the situation.

Convention-Driven

Convention-driven is an implication whose conventions consist of everyday terms such as sarcasm or mockery and some labels for humor. It refers to the mismatch of expected behavior from actual speech. In convention-driven, there are two parts consisting of internal and external.

Convention-Driven Internal

This internal convention-driven is a mismatch between the context created and the speaker's presentation to the interlocutor. Thus, it affects the internal communication between speakers and their interlocutors. More information on this implication part is described in detail as follows:

(38:43 – 38:56)

Ericson : I know what you do here. I know your game, your hustle.

Marla : You do?

Ericson : I do. And honestly, it's a good one. You saw an opportunity, and you grabbed it. **Look at all these cash cows on your wall, just leaking money into your account one overpriced hour at a time.**

The data of sarcasm or mock politeness is available in the internal convention-driven. The context created is polite but gives an insulting impression by using the term “cash cows,” which is often used in business and refers to a business's earning assets. Ericson said this about the wall photos of the elderly under Marla's supervision. Thus, it is a different context than expected, creating an implication that asserts Ericson's attempt to attack Marla's morality but still uses an indirect approach with subtle insults.

Convention-Driven External

This external convention-driven mismatch between the projected context of behavior and the context of use in the situation. This can occur when behavior and speech do not match their context. For example, the use of language or actions that are conventionally considered polite, but because of the context that causes it to be impolite.

(37:18 – 37:20)

Marla : Take a seat. Get to the point.

Ericson : I'm a lawyer.

Marla : **I don't need a lawyer.**

The positive impoliteness above implies that the context presented does not align with the behavior, which may seem polite but becomes impolite due to the context. The word "I don't need a lawyer" demonstrates an external mismatch by displaying Marla's impoliteness, which violates communication norms and social rules by disrespecting Ericson as a lawyer. This implication that Marla dominates the situation and is unafraid of the law.

Context-Driven

Context-driven implications occur when a mismatch between behavior and certain expectations causes the situation. This context can occur when disrespectful behavior involves contextual judgment to some extent. There are two parts of context-driven implications: unmarked behavior and absence of behavior.

Context-Driven Unmarked Behavior

Unmarked behavior of context-driven is that it is semantic in form but does not fit the situational context or is contradictory. It relies on language regularities and deviations from regularities to help give it pragmatic meaning, resulting in very few behaviors that can be described in this unmarked behavior.

(18:03 – 18:08)

Marla : Well, ma'am, you have to come with me.

Jennifer : I'm not going anywhere.

Marla : **This is a court order, and if you don't comply with it, I'm afraid you may be in some trouble.**

Jennifer : Oh my God.

The negative impoliteness above contains an implication where the behavior does not align with or contradicts the situational context. This is found in Marla's words, which appear polite but imply a threat and pressure on Jennifer, implying that Jennifer, as the interlocutor, does not have complete freedom and faces the consequences if she does not comply with the order.

Context-Driven Absence of Behavior

The absence of behavior is part of context-driven, which is the absence of expected behavior according to the situational context. This can lead to negative interpretations particularly prominent in situations with strong social expectations for certain behaviors. More information on this implication part is described in detail as follows:

(27:26 – 27:40)

Fran : She moved. Ms. Peterson moved.

Alexi : Oh. My mistake. Thank you.

Fran : **Excuse me. Who called you? Excuse me!**

[Alexi immediately got back into his taxi.]

The dialogue is withhold politeness, which shows Alexi's actions, which are not in line with what is expected in the context. It shows Alexi, who is “confused and upset,” so he does not answer Fran's question. Thus, the implication is that it causes the interlocutor to feel ignored and think that Alexi is suspicious.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, this study concludes that the film *I Care a Lot* consists of five impolite strategies. They are bald on record, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and withhold politeness. The most dominant impoliteness strategy in the movie is positive impoliteness, which appears 14 times (41,2%). This shows that many interactions in the data tend to involve threats, insults, or intimidation of the interlocutor. Furthermore, negative impoliteness also appears quite often, as many as 12 times (35,3%), which means there are taboo words in many conversations, ignoring or excluding the interlocutor from the social group. In

contrast, withhold politeness is rare in the movie and only appears 4 times (11,8%), and sarcasm or mock politeness appears 3 times (8,8%). Bald on record impoliteness has the lowest percentage with only one occurrence (2,9%), which indicates that these strategies are employed less frequently than the others in the interactions in this movie.

Based on its functions, politeness of the movie shows three functions which include affective impoliteness, coercive impoliteness, and entertaining impoliteness. The data indicates that the statement most used in this study is coercive, with an occurrence of 20 times (58,82%). This suggests that most of the impolite utterances found in the movie are used to pressure, control, or coerce the interlocutor. In affective, it appears 13 times (38,23%), which means that in many interactions, impoliteness is used to express strong emotions, such as anger, frustration, or panic. However, the percentage of entertaining shows that one utterance (2,94%) is used for entertainment in the movie's dialog.

The data shows that the most prominent forms of communication are positive impoliteness and coercive functions, which are more controlling and expressive. The data also demonstrates the implications of being impoliteness, which consist of three implications: form-driven, convention-driven, and context-driven. The most common impoliteness implication strategy is convention-driven, which appears 15 times (44,11%); which is an implication of everyday things that include sarcasm or ridicule that refers to the discrepancy of expected behavior from actual speech. Furthermore, context-driven implication, which appears 13 times (38,23%), shows that the mismatch between the behavior and the context causes the situation. Meanwhile, the least form-driven implication appears 6 times (17,64%), which refers to an implicit message triggered by the formal aspects of behavior and has negative consequences for the interlocutor. This is particularly true regarding instances of impoliteness motivated by habit and context. The use of impoliteness in the movie mirrors actual circumstances in which words can be used to manipulate others and impose authority. Knowing these tactics makes it easier to comprehend how impoliteness works and how it affects regular communication. The study's findings indicate that impoliteness plays a significant part in communication, particularly in movies. It is employed to depict characters and their power dynamics and create tension and conflict.

Although the studies carried out cover various aspects of impoliteness strategies, some areas remain unexplored. For example, the lack of research on factors such as comparisons with other works, non-verbal elements, and impacts in applying these strategies have not been thoroughly researched. Consequently, there is a need for more empirical research that analyses real-life conversations in various situations to understand how impoliteness operates in everyday interactions. This can provide deeper insights into the social dynamics that influence impoliteness, thus enriching the field of sociolinguistics.

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