

Impoliteness Strategies in Indonesian Political Journalism: A Pragmatic Analysis of *Bocor Alus Politik*

Arif Ramdan¹

Anugrah Putra Andriansyah²

Cecep Agus³

¹²³Institut Prima Bangsa, Indonesia

Corresponding Author:

Cecep Agus

¹ariframdan2610@gmail.com

²anugrahwar12@gmail.com

³cecep.prodi.inggris@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the use of impoliteness strategies in a political discussion program entitled "*Diplomasi Ambyar Sugiono dalam Kendali Prabowo / Bocor Alus Politik*" published on the Tempodotco YouTube channel. The study aims to identify the types of impoliteness strategies used by professional journalists and to explain how these strategies function within political and diplomatic discourse. A qualitative descriptive method was applied, following Creswell's approach to qualitative research. The data consist of 28 spoken utterances containing impoliteness strategies, which were collected through observation and documentation techniques. The utterances were transcribed and analyzed using (Culpeper, 2011) impoliteness framework. The findings reveal that all five types of impoliteness strategies appear in the data: positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, mock politeness or sarcasm, bald on record impoliteness, and withhold politeness. Positive impoliteness is the most dominant strategy, indicating that journalists frequently attack public image, credibility, and professional competence when evaluating political leadership and diplomatic performance. The results also show that impoliteness is used deliberately as a pragmatic resource rather than as an emotional reaction. Through impolite expressions, journalists construct criticism, question institutional authority, and guide audience interpretation of complex political issues. This study contributes to pragmatic and discourse studies by showing that impoliteness is normalized in professional investigative journalism, not only in informal online interactions. The findings highlight the strategic role of impoliteness in Indonesian digital political media, particularly in long-form political discussions on YouTube.

Keywords: *impoliteness strategies, political discourse, YouTube journalism, pragmatics, Indonesian media*

Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital platforms has fundamentally transformed the way political information is disseminated and debated. YouTube has emerged as a major arena for political discourse, allowing in-depth discussions that often bypass the formal constraints of traditional media. In these digital spaces, communication is not merely concerned with exchanging factual information but also involves performative actions through which speakers assert authority and challenge opposing views. According to (Yule, 1996), pragmatics focuses on the study of intended speaker meaning; therefore,

political utterances cannot be interpreted in isolation but must be analyzed in relation to their situational contexts and communicative purposes.

Within this context, impoliteness emerges as a significant linguistic phenomenon that functions as a strategic resource for negotiating power and shaping public perception. Pragmatically, impoliteness refers to the deliberate use of language to attack the face or social standing of an interlocutor. Although impolite expressions are often perceived as emotional reactions, previous studies indicate that they are frequently employed in a calculated manner in political communication. In Indonesia, this phenomenon is clearly observable in investigative journalism programs such as *Bocor Alus Politik* by Tempo, where journalists use critical and confrontational language to evaluate government policies and international diplomacy.

Previous research has extensively examined impoliteness in Indonesian political discourse, particularly in formal and semi-formal contexts. (Simanjuntak et al., 2024) and (Nizam Khairul et al., 2025) investigated impoliteness strategies in presidential debates and found that positive impoliteness was commonly used to damage opponents' public images. Similarly, (Nisa et al., 2025) and (Nur et al., 2025) analyzed the use of sarcasm and mock politeness by netizens on Instagram to express political dissatisfaction. These studies demonstrate that impoliteness plays an important role in constructing political criticism in digital environments.

Furthermore, studies conducted by the (Widya Murti et al., 2024) and (Dhanabhrata et al., 2025) reveal that emotional intensity in short-form media and fictional content often triggers bald-on-record impoliteness strategies. (Hanif et al., 2021) also suggests that podcast formats encourage more flexible and direct forms of impoliteness compared to conventional television programs. Collectively, these studies indicate that digital media facilitates diverse impoliteness practices; however, they primarily focus on public figures, netizens, or fictional narratives rather than professional journalists.

Despite the growing body of research on impoliteness in political discourse, limited attention has been paid to how professional journalists employ impoliteness in long-form investigative programs, particularly in discussions of international diplomacy. Previous studies rarely examine the strategic use of withhold politeness and other subtle forms of impoliteness in structured journalistic criticism. Moreover, critical diplomatic issues, such as the "Peace Council" polemic and Indonesia-US trade tariffs, remain largely unexplored in pragmatic impoliteness research. Therefore, a significant gap remains in understanding how impoliteness operates within investigative political podcasts in the Indonesian context.

Based on this gap, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) What types of impoliteness strategies are used in the *Bocor Alus Politik* video? and (2) How are these strategies pragmatically constructed in relation to their contextual meanings? The objectives of this study are to identify the dominant impoliteness strategies and to explain their communicative functions in political journalism. By applying (Culpeper, 2011) impoliteness framework and (Yule, 1996) pragmatic perspective, this research aims to reveal how linguistic choices contribute to journalistic goals. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on professional investigative journalism and international diplomacy issues, which have received limited attention in Indonesian pragmatic studies. This study argues that impoliteness functions as a deliberate pragmatic resource for social control and ideological positioning in the digital era.

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design. The qualitative approach was chosen because the study aims to explore and describe linguistic phenomena in their natural context rather than to measure variables statistically. According to (Creswell, 2014), qualitative research is appropriate when researchers seek to understand meaning, patterns, and processes based on textual or spoken data. This design is suitable for answering the research question, as it allows for an in-depth examination of impoliteness strategies used in political discourse.

The subject of this research was a political discussion video entitled "*Diplomasi Ambyar Sugiono dalam Kendali Prabowo / Bocor Alus Politik*", published on the official Tempodotco YouTube channel. The participants in the video are professional journalists who discuss Indonesian diplomatic and political issues. The data of the study consist of spoken utterances containing impoliteness strategies produced during the discussion. A total of 28 relevant utterances were selected as the research data. The sampling was purposive, as only utterances that clearly reflected impoliteness strategies were included. This sampling technique is appropriate for qualitative research, where data selection is based on relevance to the research focus (Creswell, 2014)

The data were collected through documentation and observation techniques. The video was accessed via YouTube and carefully watched several times to ensure accurate understanding of the context. The researchers transcribed the spoken interaction verbatim to obtain written data. The transcription served as the main research instrument, supported by an analytical framework based on (Culpeper, 2011) theory of impoliteness. No additional equipment was required beyond standard audio-visual playback tools. The recorded data consist of verbal utterances in Indonesian, which were later translated into English for analysis and reporting.

Data analysis was conducted through several systematic steps. First, the transcribed data were read repeatedly to gain overall familiarity. Second, utterances containing impoliteness were identified and coded. Third, each utterance was classified according to Culpeper's five impoliteness strategies. Finally, the frequency and forms of each strategy were described and interpreted in relation to pragmatic theory and previous studies. These procedures were carried out in an ordered and transparent manner to ensure that the study can be replicated. Throughout the analysis, attention was given to contextual meaning and speaker intention, which are essential aspects of qualitative linguistic analysis as emphasized by (Creswell, 2014)

Results

The data analyzed in this study were taken from a political discussion video entitled "*Diplomasi Ambyar Sugiono dalam Kendali Prabowo / Bocor Alus Politik*", published on the official YouTube channel *Tempodotco*. The video features investigative journalists discussing Indonesia's diplomatic policies, foreign relations, and political leadership. A total of 28 spoken utterances containing impoliteness strategies were identified and transcribed. These utterances were classified using Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness framework.

The analysis shows that all five types of impoliteness strategies proposed by Culpeper appear in the data. The distribution of these strategies is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency of Impoliteness Strategies

No	Type of Impoliteness	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Positive Impoliteness	9	32.14

No	Type of Impoliteness	Frequency	Percentage (%)
2	Mock Politeness / Sarcasm	8	28.57
3	Negative Impoliteness	6	21.43
4	Bald on Record	3	10.71
5	Withhold Politeness	2	7.14
Total		28	100

Based on the table above, positive impoliteness is the most frequently used strategy, followed by negative impoliteness and mock politeness or sarcasm. The following sections describe how each strategy is realized through multiple utterances in the video.

Positive Impoliteness

Positive impoliteness appears frequently in the form of ridicule, derogatory evaluation, and attacks on competence and moral integrity. This strategy targets the interlocutor's positive face by damaging their public image. One strong example is shown in the utterance:

"Pernyataan-pernyataan Indonesia yang enggak jelas gitu."

This utterance discredits the clarity and professionalism of Indonesia's diplomatic communication. Another instance can be found in the following statement:

"Ini nyaris enggak ada nih selama Sugiono menjadi Menlu."

The utterance portrays the foreign minister as ineffective and lacking achievement. Positive impoliteness is also used to imply unethical motivation, as seen in:

"Dipakai oleh Presiden bersama orang-orang yang sangat dekat."

This utterance suggests elitism and favoritism in the use of state facilities. These examples illustrate how positive impoliteness is used repeatedly to undermine credibility and social identity.

Negative Impoliteness

Negative impoliteness is realized through utterances that restrict autonomy, deny legitimacy, or highlight institutional weakness. One example is shown in the following utterance:

"Kita juga enggak bisa keluar dari kerangka negosiasi tarif."

This utterance emphasizes political dependency and limits national agency. Another instance occurs in:

"Kami duta besar bahkan tidak masuk dalam ruangan itu."

The statement highlights the marginalization of professional diplomats. These utterances show how negative impoliteness is used to question authority and institutional legitimacy.

Mock Politeness or Sarcasm

Mock politeness or sarcasm appears through ironic statements that convey criticism indirectly. One example can be observed in the utterance:

"Prabowo menyinggung kita. Siapa? Tempo lu aja kali."

Another sarcastic instance is found in:

"Apa enggak cukup upacara aja?"

Although phrased as a question, the utterance conveys dismissal of diplomatic ceremonial practices. These examples demonstrate how sarcasm relies on shared contextual understanding to deliver criticism.

Bald on Record Impoliteness

Bald on record impoliteness is realized through direct and unmitigated criticism. An example is shown below:

"Jangan-jangan Tempo itu didanai oleh asing."

This utterance presents a direct accusation without mitigation. Another example is:

"Politik luar negeri ini sangat personalistik."

These utterances demonstrate explicit and straightforward criticism.

Withhold Politeness

Withhold politeness appears when expected politeness or support is absent. One instance is shown in:

"Kita dituduh menjadi antek-anteknya George Soros."

The speaker reports the accusation without offering politeness or defense. Another instance occurs when a speaker avoids expressing support for the minister's absence. These examples indicate that silence and lack of endorsement function as impolite acts.

Overall, the results show that impoliteness strategies are systematically employed throughout the discussion. The findings above describe the forms and frequency of impoliteness without interpretation. The following section discusses these findings in relation to pragmatic theory and previous research.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that impoliteness strategies in *Bocor Alus Politik* function as deliberate pragmatic resources rather than spontaneous emotional expressions. In line with (Yule, 1996) view that meaning is shaped by speaker intention and situational context, the journalists' utterances reflect conscious linguistic choices aimed at evaluating political leadership and diplomatic performance. Impoliteness is employed to frame criticism, assert evaluative authority, and guide public interpretation of complex political issues.

The dominance of positive impoliteness in the data suggests that attacking public image and credibility is a central strategy in investigative political discourse. By ridiculing competence, questioning integrity, and implying personal motives, journalists undermine the social identity of political actors. This finding aligns with (Hendar et al., 2022), who report that positive impoliteness is frequently used in digital political discourse to damage reputation and influence audience perception. Similar patterns are also observed in YouTube-based political discussions analyzed by the (Hanif et al., 2021), which highlights the prevalence of evaluative and dismissive language in podcast-style debates. Negative impoliteness further reinforces this critical stance by denying legitimacy and restricting institutional authority. Utterances that emphasize diplomatic dependency or exclude professional actors function to question the right of political figures to represent national interests. This result supports (Simanjuntak et al., 2024), who found that negative impoliteness is commonly used in presidential debates to delegitimize opposing positions. A comparable tendency is also reported by (Septiawan et al., 2025) in their analysis of political debates, where negative impoliteness serves to challenge authority and weaken institutional credibility.

Sarcasm or mock politeness appears as a less frequent but pragmatically significant strategy. Through ironic praise and rhetorical questioning, journalists convey criticism indirectly while relying on shared contextual knowledge with the audience. This finding is consistent with (Nurfitri et al., 2026), who demonstrates that mock politeness is often employed in digital interaction to express dissatisfaction without direct confrontation. Similar uses of sarcasm are also identified in political discourse on TikTok and YouTube, where indirect impoliteness enhances persuasive impact (Widya Murti et al., 2024).

Although bald on record impoliteness occurs less frequently than other strategies, its presence marks moments of explicit and unmitigated criticism. Direct accusations and straightforward evaluative statements signal strong journalistic positioning. This finding supports (Nizam Khairul et al., 2025), who argue that bald on record impoliteness is commonly used in political debates to emphasize urgency and assert discursive dominance. The use of such direct strategies in *Bocor Alus Politik* reflects the investigative nature of the program, where clarity and accountability are prioritized.

Withhold politeness emerges as the least frequent strategy but remains pragmatically meaningful. The absence of expected acknowledgment, support, or defense functions as an implicit form of criticism. This finding aligns with (Nurfitri et al., 2026), who reports that silence and lack of response can operate as impolite acts in political debates. Similar patterns are also observed in expressive discourse analyzed by (Dhanabhrata et al., 2025), where the absence of politeness markers contributes to evaluative meaning.

Compared to previous studies that primarily examine netizen comments or fictional narratives, such as (Nisa et al., 2025), this study offers a different empirical perspective by focusing on spoken interaction among professional journalists. The findings demonstrate that impoliteness is not limited to informal online spaces but is also normalized within professional political journalism. This observation is consistent with (Huda et al., 2024), who note that political debates increasingly allow flexible use of evaluative and confrontational language.

Overall, this study confirms that impoliteness in digital political journalism functions as a strategic and normalized form of pragmatic action. The findings support (Culpeper, 2011) theoretical framework while reinforcing (Yule, 1996) emphasis on intention and context. By examining *Bocor Alus Politik* as a case study, this research contributes to a broader understanding of how impoliteness operates in contemporary Indonesian political discourse, particularly within investigative media formats.

Conclusion

This study examines the use of impoliteness strategies in the political discussion program *Bocor Alus Politik* published on the Tempodotco YouTube channel by applying (Culpeper, 2011) framework. The findings show that all five types of impoliteness strategies appear in the journalists' spoken interaction. Positive impoliteness is the most frequently used strategy, indicating that criticism in the program mainly targets public image, credibility, and professional competence of political actors.

The results suggest that impoliteness in this context is not accidental or emotionally driven. Instead, it is used deliberately as a communicative tool to evaluate political leadership, question diplomatic performance, and express journalistic judgment. This finding supports the view that meaning in discourse is shaped by speaker intention and situational context. Through impolite expressions, journalists are able to simplify complex political issues and guide audience interpretation in a critical manner.

This study also shows that impoliteness is not limited to informal online interaction or anonymous comments. It is actively used in professional political journalism, especially in investigative discussion formats where direct evaluation and confrontation are considered acceptable. By focusing on spoken interaction among journalists, this research extends previous studies that mainly examine impoliteness in netizen discourse or fictional texts. Therefore, this study contributes to pragmatic research by showing how impoliteness functions as a normalized and strategic practice in Indonesian digital political media.

However, several limitations should be noted. This study analyzes data from only one YouTube program and a limited number of utterances, which means that the findings cannot be generalized to all political media. In addition, the analysis focuses only on verbal expressions and does not include non-verbal elements such as intonation, facial expression, or audience response, which may also affect pragmatic interpretation.

Based on these limitations, future studies are encouraged to examine impoliteness strategies in a wider range of political communication settings, such as television debates, parliamentary sessions, or other digital platforms. Further research may also include multimodal analysis to explore how verbal impoliteness interacts with non-verbal cues. Comparative studies involving different speaker roles, such as journalists, politicians, and online audiences, are also recommended to provide a broader understanding of impoliteness in political discourse

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