# Impoliteness strategies used by haters and supporters of presidential candidates in cyber-conflicts

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## Abstract

The 2024 Indonesian presidential election is anticipated to be highly contested, with the potential for online hostility to escalate into real-world conflict. This study examines the impoliteness strategies used by supporters and haters of presidential candidates on social media, specifically within Instagram comments. Employing a qualitative approach, the study analyzed a sample of comments, revealing a predominance of negative impoliteness (70%), followed by positive impoliteness (46%). Sarcasm and mock impoliteness were observed in 17% of cases, while bald-on-record impoliteness was the least common (11%). Interestingly, no evidence of withhold politeness was found. These findings highlight the prevalence of online aggression in Indonesian election discourse, underscoring the need for strategies to mitigate the negative impacts of online impoliteness and protect national unity.

**Keywords:** cyber-conflicts, cyberpragmatics, impoliteness

## INTRODUCTION

The increasing use of social media platforms like Instagram for communication and information sharing has led to growing concerns about cyber-conflict. Research by Zhong (2018) on Sina Weibo and Ibrahima (2020) on Twitter highlights how impoliteness, often driven by differing opinions or actions, can fuel online conflicts. This impoliteness, manifested through negative comments, insults, and misinformation, can escalate into real-world conflicts.

Social media has become a key platform for political communication, but online impoliteness is often used by supporters and haters of candidates to trigger conflict. This violates politeness norms intended to avoid threats and preserve face, leading to a rise in online hostility. This is particularly concerning in the context of the 2024 Indonesian presidential election, where the presence of three candidates risks dividing the population and exacerbating online hostility.

Examples like the comments on @suaraanies' Instagram post - "@samsulhuda6165: *Indonesia ngk butuh orang banyak bacot"* (Indonesia doesn't need people who talk a lot), and "@n4billaranvie: *Lebih bacotan yang komen wkwk"* (Those who comment talk more) -

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show how insults and provocative language are used to trigger arguments and undermine political discourse. This behavior violates politeness norms and risks escalating online conflicts into real-world problems.

Cyberpragmatics, as defined by Yus (2010), is the study of online communication, focusing on understanding the context and meaning behind interactions. This study examines how users interpret virtual contexts to understand online communication, particularly on platforms like Instagram. Understanding the types of impoliteness and their motivations is crucial for mitigating the negative impacts of online aggression and promoting national unity, especially in the lead up to the 2024 election.

**METHODS**

This study employed a descriptive-qualitative approach to investigate the use of impoliteness strategies by supporters and haters of presidential candidates on Instagram comments. Following Creswell (2016), the researcher collected data through observation and analysis of comments, interpreting the phenomena in terms of their meaning and context. As Ary and Rezarviech (1997) explain, a descriptive study aims to capture and describe existing language phenomena, which is the focus of this research.

The data for this study consists of impolite comments made by supporters and haters of presidential candidates on an Instagram post by @suaraanies, dated January 7, 2024. These comments were collected from the Instagram comment section and relate to the debate between the three presidential and vice presidential candidates in the lead-up to the 2024 Indonesian presidential election.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

There were 144 utterances selected as the data. The data were analyzed by applying Miles Huberman and Saldana's (2014) analysis model. The following table 1 is the summary of the type of impoliteness, then afterwards it will be defined narratively.

Table 1. Type of Impoliteness Strategies Used by Haters and Supporters of Presidential Candidates

| No | Type of impoliteness strategies | Haters | Supporters |
|----|----|----|----|
| | | Frequencies | |
| 1. | Bald on Record Impoliteness | 8 | 3 |
| 2. | Positive Impoliteness | 35 | 11 |
| 3. | Negative Impoliteness | 27 | 43 |
| 4. | Withhold Politeness | - | - |
| 5. | Sarcasm or Mock Impoliteness | 8 | 9 |
| Total | | 78 | 66 |

The table above shows the types of impoliteness strategies used by both haters and supporters of presidential candidates. The most dominant type used is negative impoliteness which is 70. The usage of negative impoliteness intended to harm the addressee's negative face wants. Negative impoliteness followed by positive impoliteness which is 46, this kind of impoliteness strategy is intended to harm or to attack the addressee's good image when they want to be recognized as a member of society. Sarcasm or Mock Impoliteness 17. This type as most of the haters and supporters, those who are very upset and angry, prefer to express it clearly rather than sarcastically. The last was Bald on Record Impoliteness was 11. It shows an intention that haters and supporters wanted to attack the face of the listener to the point. In this research, the researcher did not find Withhold Politeness. Generally, this type appears a lot in spoken conversation. Because withhold politeness is the strategy people use to expect politeness. In this case, silence and non gratitude are implementations of Withhold politeness. In this strategy, the speaker does not carry out the polite actions expected by the listener; she or he just remains silent and does not take any action. So, in total, there were 144 impolite utterances.

1. **Bald on Record Impoliteness**

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The use of strategy intended for a person to express dislike in the most direct and clear manner possible. In one of the posts from the IG account @suaraanis, which discusses the third debate of the presidential candidates, there was a negative comment to attack Anis's quality face. This kind of bald on record impoliteness can be seen in the following data:

*@jabarudin_1717 Banyak Omonng aja lu nis... (@jabarudin_1717 You just talk a lot, nis) (Addressed to Anis)*

In these utterances, Jabarudin means to attack Anis. This includes a **hater's comment** because the clause "**You just talk a lot**" is a **negative verb clause**. This character can damage Anis's face. The similar type of data can be found in the following:

*@kamal_zakaria13 Anies anisss gatau diri banget sih nis (@kamal_zakaria13 Aniss, aniss doesn't have self-awareness, niss?) (Addressed to Anis)*

These utterances also mean to attack Anis's ability to speak by saying he does not have awareness because Anis is attacking other candidate pairs. This comment is included in the haters comment because it provokes the reader by using a **negative verb clause,** namely, **"aniss doesn't have** self-awareness**."**

**2. Positive Impoliteness**

A strategy a person uses to show dislike for someone, but the person does not show it clearly. This kind of positive impoliteness can be seen in the following data:

*@paisal2803 **cocot** (@paisal2803 cocot (a Javanese word that is classified as rude, which means just empty talk) (Addressed to Anis)*

The sentence above is not clear which number the presidential candidate is addressing, he only mentions *"cocot* (a Javanese word that is classified as rude, which means just empty talk)". This includes a **hater's comment** because he uses negative language in the form of **"cocot".** The similar type data can be found in the following:

*@fithrymagdalenaa Tong kosong (@fithrymagdalenaa Empty barrel (Addressed to Anis)*

This sentence also shows that she does not like the presidential candidate, but it is not clear who she means. This includes a **hater's comment** because she uses negative language in the form of **"Tong kosong (Empty barrel)".**

**3. Negative Impoliteness**

The use of a strategy intended to harm the addressee's negative facial wants is known as negative impoliteness. Here, "negative face wants" refers to frightening the other by instilling the belief that action detrimental to the other will occur. This kind of negative impoliteness can be seen in the following data:

*@renithaerviana to @_oniii96 Anis jadi gubernur siapa yg mengusung kalok bukan BPK prabowo.kayak gak punya dosa aja Anis dan katanya pemimpin kok mengolok (@renithaerviana to @_oniii96 Anis, who will nominate him as governor, if not Mr. Prabowo? It's like Anis doesn't have any sins, and you are a leader. Why does the leader make fun?) (Addressed to Anis)*

The sentence above could hurt Anis, presidential candidate number 1, by saying, **"Anis, who will nominate him as governor, if not Mr. Prabowo? It's like Anis doesn't have any sins, and you are a leader. Why does the leader make fun?"** She made social media users believe that Anis was a bad leader. This utterance used **negative compound sentences** marked with "It's like Anis doesn't have any sins **and** you are a leader. Why does the leader make fun?" Therefore, this sentence includes comments from haters.

The similar type data can be found in the following: *@samsulhuda6165 iIndonesia ngk butuh orang banyak bacot (@samsulhuda6165 Indonesia does not need people who talk a lot.) (Addressed to Anis)*

This sentence also uses negative impoliteness because it deliberately makes the image of presidential candidate number one bad by giving the statement, **"Indonesia does not need people who talk a lot."** This includes a **hater's comment** because he uses negative adjective phrases "Indonesia does not need people who **talk a lot**."

**4. Sarcasm or Mock Impoliteness**

This strategy is the opposite of the fact being discussed because the speaker intentionally uses sarcasm, which implies that the speaker wants to mock the listener. This kind of sarcasm or mock impoliteness can be seen in the following data:

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*@ririn_fitriana12 to @ratnadewi4124 lah namanya juga sesi debat...kalo jangan kebanyakan ngomong namanya adu bengong.* (@ririn_fitriana12 to @ratnadewi4124  It's a debate, so naturally there's gonna be some talking... but if you don't have anything to say, you'll just look foolish.) (*Addressed to Prabowo-Gibran*)

This data shows that @ririn_fitriana12 was teasing @ratnadewi4124 by saying, "**It's a debate, so naturally there's gonna be some talking… but if you don't have anything to say, you'll just look foolish.**" This comment is from **a supporter** because she expresses positive opinions and promotes the object of her support.

The similar type data can be found in the following:

*@shaybds00 to @yogi.widarto.7 nanyain O dp Mulu kaya mu beli aje lu* (@shaybds00 to @yogi.widarto.7 keep asking about the 0 down payment, like you just want to buy it.) (*Addressed to Haters*)

This sentence uses sarcasm or mock impoliteness because it looks like he is mocking the account @yogi.widarto.7 by replying**, "Keep asking about the 0 down payment, like you just want to buy it."** This comment is considered **a supporter** because he is defending the candidate of his choice who has been insulted.

## CONCLUSION

This research revealed that supporters and haters of presidential candidates frequently employed impolite language in their Instagram comments. Drawing on Culpeper's (2010) framework, the study found evidence of four out of five impoliteness strategies – bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, and sarcasm or mock impoliteness – with withhold politeness absent. Notably, positive impoliteness was the most common strategy among haters, while negative impoliteness was most frequently used by supporters.

It was not found withhold politeness in this study. People might feel less hesitant to say impolite things to someone they don't know well or haven't met face-to-face, because the anonymity of online interactions can make them feel less accountable for their words. While this type of communication appears a lot in face-to-face communication, virtual communication presents a different context. The absence of visual cues—like facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice—makes it challenging to accurately gauge the potential impact of our words. This lack of context can contribute to the perception that online communication is less polite, as it's difficult to interpret intended meaning without these nonverbal signals.

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